BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES



Challenges and Opportunities of Community Participation in Local Governance in Zimbabwe: A Case Study of Bindura Municipality

By

Rumbidzai Muchenje (B223237B)

Supervisor: Dr T. J. Katsinde

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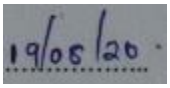
ABSTRACT

This study examined community participation in local governance in Bindura Urban Council with the aim of identifying the mechanisms, challenges, and opportunities associated with participatory governance. The research was significant as ineffective community participation has resulted in weak accountability, poor service delivery, and a fragile relationship between the council and residents, making it necessary to investigate ways of enhancing inclusive governance. The study adopted a qualitative research approach using a case study design. A sample of 30 participants comprising council officials, ward councillors, community members, and civil society representatives was selected through purposive and snowball sampling. Data was collected using in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and documentary analysis, and analysed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that ward meetings, budget consultations, and Community Development Committees were the main mechanisms of participation, but they were irregular, poorly implemented, and largely ineffective. The study also found that political interference, low civic awareness, socioeconomic barriers, gender disparities, and institutional capacity constraints hindered effective participation. However, opportunities such as the constitutional framework, civil society organisations, information and communication technology, and capacity building were identified as key drivers for improving participation. The study concluded that community participation in Bindura remains largely tokenistic, with limited citizen influence on decision-making. It recommended the strengthening of participatory mechanisms, enhanced civic education, promotion of inclusive practices, and increased use of digital platforms to improve community engagement.

DECLARATION FORM

I, **B223237B**, declare that this dissertation entitled *"Challenges and opportunities of Community Participation in Local Governance in Zimbabwe: A Case Study of Bindura Urban Council"* is my own original work and has not been submitted to any other university or institution of higher learning for the award of any degree or qualification.

I further declare that all sources of information used in this study have been duly acknowledged and referenced in accordance with academic conventions.

Student :  Date: 

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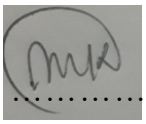
Chairperson :  Date: ……27/08/2026……

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, whose unwavering support, encouragement, and understanding made it possible for me to complete this study.

I also dedicate this work to all community members in Bindura who strive for meaningful participation in local governance, as well as to those working towards promoting inclusive and democratic governance in Zimbabwe.

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Above all, I am grateful to God for the strength, wisdom, and perseverance to complete this study successfully.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONSAND ACRONYMS

BUSE – Bindura University of Science Education

CDC – Community Development Committee

CSO – Civil Society Organisation

FGD – Focus Group Discussion

ICT – Information and Communication Technology

NDSl – National Development Strategy l

RAs – Residents Associations

SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

ZIMSTAT – Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

In any society, democratic participation is based on local governance. It serves as the most direct channel of communication between the public and the government, giving communities the most direct say in decisions that impact their day-to-day existence. Section 264 of the 20l3 Constitution, which expressly calls for the transfer of governmental authority to provincial and local authorities in order to grant the people the ability to govern themselves and to improve community involvement, serves as the constitutional foundation for local governance in Zimbabwe. In many urban councils throughout the nation, including Bindura Urban Council, community involvement in local governance is still primarily tokenistic, superficial, and ineffectual in spite of this constitutional provision.

Mashonaland Central Province's capital, Bindura, is located about 88 kilometers north of Harare. As an urban local government, Bindura Urban Council is in charge of providing its citizens with basic services like road maintenance, garbage collection, water supply, and public health services. The Urban Councils Act Chapter 29:l5, which establishes the legal foundation for local government management in urban Zimbabwe, governs the council's operations. Nevertheless, scholars, civil societies,

and community members remain worried about the extent to which the population of Bindura gets involved in the decision-making processes at the local council level.

There are several views on the relationship between community participation in local governance and the role of the process in governance and peace-building. According to scholars such as Arnstein (1969), community participation must involve the citizens' voice in making decisions that affect them and should be more than consultation and token participation. The result of the lack of inclusion in governance processes among the community members leads to social unrest, dissatisfaction, and mistrust, which threaten social cohesion and legitimacy of the institution itself. However, the evidence indicates that community participation contributes to reduced risk of conflicts and promotes peaceful co-existence of citizens and local authorities (UNDP, 2015).

Among the challenges mentioned by previous literature as hindering effective citizen participation in local governance in Zimbabwe are political interference, lack of civic awareness, weak institutional structure, and financial constraints, among others (Chatiza, 2010; Kurebwa, 2015). Unfortunately, these challenges are not foreign to Bindura Urban Council either. People have consistently complained about the poor services rendered by the council and about their fears of exclusion from important decision-making processes such as policy making, development planning, and budget consultation. There appears to be a clear gap between what is happening in practice at Bindura and the constitutional provision for participatory governance. Thus, a systematic academic research is needed to bridge the gap.

This study therefore seeks to examine citizen participation in Bindura Urban Council local governance, focusing specifically on the aspects of opportunity, challenges,

and mechanisms involved in such participation. The recommendations made here will be very useful in improving participatory governance in Bindura while

contributing to existing research on the subject matter in Zimbabwean urban local government context.

1.2 Aim of the Study

The aim of this research is to evaluate the problems and possibilities associated with community involvement in the administration of local authorities in Zimbabwe, focusing on the Bindura Town Council in particular, and suggest ways to promote participatory democratic governance.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Community participation in local governance remains highly ineffective in Bindura Urban Council, thereby limiting the ability of the population to have an input into decisions that affect their lives on a daily basis.

While it is clear that there are provisions within the Zimbabwean Constitution and the Urban Councils Act that allow for participation within the governance process, the reality on the ground is that the Bindura Urban Council has failed to foster a platform where such forms of citizen participation can occur. There have been few ward meetings, little public knowledge of the budget consultation process, and many citizens feel disengaged from council decisions on issues as diverse as water provision, housing, and infrastructure. Such a gap between the council and the communities it represents has caused a general sense of distrust amongst the citizenry, leading to apathy towards participating in political matters and sometimes even

causing outright conflicts between the citizens of Bindura and their local leaders. The effects of such an ineffective participation regime include poor service delivery

performance and weak institutional accountability mechanisms. Surprisingly, despite the existence of laws promoting participation, very few studies have been carried out to establish why participation is ineffective in Bindura and how it could be enhanced.

1.4 Research Objectives

1. To examine the mechanisms used by Bindura Urban Council to facilitate community participation in local governance decision-making processes.
2. To investigate the challenges that hinder effective community participation in local governance in Bindura Urban Council.
3. To assess the opportunities available for enhancing community participation in local governance in Bindura Urban Council.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What mechanisms does Bindura Urban Council use to facilitate community participation in local governance decision-making processes?
2. What challenges hinder effective community participation in local governance in Bindura Urban Council?
3. What opportunities exist for enhancing community participation in local governance in Bindura Urban Council?

1.6 Assumptions of the Study

Assumption one is that the citizens in Bindura are aware, to some extent, of their constitutional right to be involved in the process of local governance. Assumption two is that there are means through which Bindura Urban Council can engage the communities, albeit few in number. Assumption three is that the informants will provide candid responses regarding their experiences in participating in the local governance process.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The current study is of immense importance at many different levels. At the policymaking level, the findings of the current study will make recommendations to the Bindura Urban Council and the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works on how to build participatory governance mechanisms within urban local councils. The current study will help administrators and ward councillors identify challenges preventing community involvement and learn strategies for overcoming those barriers.

Academically speaking, the current study has made a contribution to existing literature regarding participatory governance, local democracy and peace-building in Zimbabwe and Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole. Specifically, the findings of the study will contribute to scholarly discussions and debates surrounding the concept of ladder of participation as outlined by Arnstein. Also, the civil societies involved in activities such as governance, civics, and peace building in the Mashonaland Central Province will find the outcomes ofthe study useful as they develop community engagement initiatives in Bindura.

1.8 Delimitations of the Study

The study is restricted in terms of geography to Bindura Urban Council of Mashonaland Central Province, Zimbabwe. Specifically, it concentrates on community involvement in decision-making processes of local government operations within the geographical scope of the urban council. The time frame of the research extends from 2013 to 2024 and overlaps with the implementation of the new constitution of Zimbabwe adopted in 2013 that incorporated provisions for devolution.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

This research will not capture the experiences of all residents of Bindura given the constraints of qualitative sampling. The findings may therefore not be generalised beyond the study's specific context. Furthermore, some council officials may be reluctant to disclose information perceived as sensitive or politically contentious, which may affect the depth of data obtained from that category of respondents. The researcher will mitigate this limitation by assuring all participants of confidentiality and anonymity in accordance with ethical research standards.

1.10 Definition of Key Terms

Community Participation: The active involvement of citizens in the processes of planning, decision-making, implementation, and monitoring of local governance activities (Arnstein, 1969).

Local Governance: The system through which local authorities and communities collectively manage public affairs, resources, and service delivery at the local level (UNDP, 2015).

Urban Council: A statutory local authority established under the Urban Councils Act Chapter 29:15 of Zimbabwe, responsible for administering urban areas and delivering municipal services to residents.

Devolution: The constitutional transfer of political, administrative, and fiscal powers from central government to sub-national levels of government to promote local self-governance (Government of Zimbabwe, 2013).

Social Cohesion: The degree of connectedness, trust, and solidarity among members of a community that enables them to coexist peacefully and cooperate in pursuit of shared goals (UNDP, 2015).

1.11 Dissertation Outline

Chapter One provides the introduction and background to the study, presenting the research problem, purpose, objectives, research questions, assumptions, significance, delimitations, limitations, and key term definitions. Chapter Two presents a review of relevant literature and the theoretical framework underpinning the study, focusing on participatory governance theory, democratic governance, and peacebuilding literature. Chapter Three outlines the research methodology, detailing the research philosophy, design, population, sampling strategy, data collection methods, and ethical considerations. Chapter Four presents, analyses, and discusses the findings of the study in relation to the research objectives and questions. Chapter Five provides a summary of the study, draws conclusions from the findings, and offers recommendations for policy and practice as well as areas for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The literature review focuses on relevant literature regarding the involvement of communities in local governance, particularly the issues and prospects that arise from this involvement in urban local councils. The chapter discusses the positioning of the current study within the already existing theories in this area while highlighting areas where there is an absence of information which the current study aims to fill. International, African, and Zimbabwean literature is used in reviewing the literature on the matter to gain a thorough comprehension of the issue under investigation. The chapter is structured thematically, starting with a conceptual discussion of community participation and local governance before discussing participation in local governance.

2.2 Conceptualising Community Participation

Participation in the community is a complex notion, which has received great interest from many researchers from the field of political science, development studies, public administration, and even peace and conflict studies. Participation, at the simplest definition, is a term describing the role of citizens in the decision-making process. However, the issue of the depth of involvement of the citizens has been a topic of debate among academics, giving rise to a number of theoretical frameworks analyzing the idea of participation from the standpoint of passivity to empowerment.

Arnstein (1969) offered one of the most influential conceptualisations of citizen participation through her seminal ladder of citizen participation, which categorises participation into eight rungs organised into three broad levels. The lowest

level, which Arnstein termed non-participation, encompasses manipulation and therapy, where citizens are engaged not to enable their participation but to educate or cure them of their perceived ignorance. The middle level, tokenism, includes informing, consultation, and placation, where citizens may be heard but lack the power to ensure that their views are acted upon. The highest level, citizen power, encompasses partnership, delegated power, and citizen control, where communities have genuine decision-making authority. This model is important in understanding the research problem because the framework serves as an analytical tool that can help determine the quality of participation of the residents in Bindura Urban Council, enabling the researcher to find out whether their engagement is actually empowering or a mere sham.

In elaborating on Arnstein's hierarchy, Cornwall (2008) proposed that participation should not only be seen from the standpoint of its mode but also its purpose. In her study, Cornwall made the differentiation between "invited spaces," in which state structures invite people to participate in community activities, and "claimed" or "created" spaces, wherein communities initiate actions of claiming inclusion in institutions as well as making demands for accountability. This perspective is highly relevant to this research because the issue of whether community participation in the local council in Bindura is due to true institutional effort rather than mere legal compliance becomes evident. Another perspective is that of White (l996), who warned about the potential tyranny of participation, suggesting that participation processes may be controlled by some individuals and serve as tools of legitimizing decisions already taken without real community participation.

2.3 Local Governance and Community Participation in Africa

Decentralization and reforms in local governance have been extensively advocated in Africa as vehicles through which democratic practice can be improved and development enhanced. The underlying principle behind the theory of decentralization argues that decision making should be done closer to the population in order to foster effective governance and accountability. Nonetheless, it can be argued that the practice of decentralization has often been less participatory than expected in sub-Saharan Africa, with many local councils being dominated by elites and lacking sufficient resources and capacity to connect effectively with the community.

Through a comparative analysis of local governance in Africa, Olowu and Wunsch (2004) identified the failure of participatory local governance on the continent as arising from three key issues: first, the tendency towards concentrating actual power at the level of central governments in spite of decentralization; second, lack of institutional capacity of local government due to lack of both human and financial resources; third, lack of a culture of civic engagement among citizens. The findings ofthe study are highly relevant to the issue of decentralization in Zimbabwe.

Community participation in Uganda according to Goetz and Gaventa (2001) was hampered by the lack of civic consciousness, difficulties in reaching the communities and the control by local elites of the council's decision-making process. In similar ways, the findings of the research conducted by Ayee (2008) revealed that community participation in the district assembly in Ghana was hindered by poor

political literacy levels among people, gender inequality in participation and the use of community participation by local authorities in a procedural manner. The above

experiences in Africa offer a basis for comparison on the same phenomenon in Bindura Urban Council.

2.4 Community Participation in Local Governance in Zimbabwe

In particular, the devolution policy in Zimbabwe has evolved significantly since the introduction of Section 264 of the 2013 Constitution and other legislation such as the Urban Councils Act Chapter 29:15 providing for community participation through means such as ward meetings, public hearings and consultations on budget and developmental plans. However, academic literature shows that despite these developments, the gap between theoretical expectations for devolution and practice in Zimbabwe's urban local authorities is still huge. In particular, Chatiza (2010) claims that a long-term administrative culture dominated Zimbabwe's local governance system, putting the interests of the national government ahead of those of communities and failing to accommodate participatory decision-making in local administrations. Kurebwa (2015) corroborates this finding in his research on local governance in Zimbabwe stating that residents' involvement in decision-making process was restricted to elections while there was very limited consultation outside election periods. Moreover, ward councillors appointed to ensure interaction between the communities and councils proved inefficient because of low competence, influence of political parties and lack of accountability systems.

According to Mapuva (2015), devolution and democratic governance in Zimbabwe have a relationship in that although the 2013 Constitution facilitated a favorable environment for participatory governance, the same process has been constrained by the unwillingness on the part of the central government to allocate resources to local authorities as well as by the centralized decision-making cultures existing in councils. As regards the urban local authorities, Nhema (2016) noted that in Zimbabwe, the process of consultations for the development of budget estimates has become a mere formality, in that the councils prepare budgets in advance and then seek approval from the public through consultative processes. This clearly shows that there exists a gap in the adoption of participatory governance practices in urban local authorities of Zimbabwe, which seems to be evident in Bindura Urban Council

2.5 Mechanisms for Community Participation in Local Governance

There are a number of ways through which the local authorities can be able to promote community participation in governance in literature. Such include formal as well as informal institutional participation frameworks and the success of these mechanisms hinges greatly on the existence of good political will among local authorities as well as the capacity of communities to participate within an enabling governance environment.

Ward meetings have been noted as one of the key mechanisms that have been established for the purpose of encouraging community participation within the framework of local governance in Zimbabwe. According to the Urban Councils Act of Zimbabwe, ward councillors should hold periodic ward meetings where residents are given an opportunity to air their grievances, get information concerning council

operations and contribute to the planning of local development initiatives. However, Nhema (2016) noted that ward meetings in many urban councils in Zimbabwe have become irregular, poorly attended and partisan.

Public hearings and budget consultations are other mechanisms through which councils can involve the communities in the process of local governance.

Internationally, participatory budgeting has been hailed as a remarkable governance innovation, having originated in Porto Alegre in Brazil and having been instrumental in enhancing resource distribution equity and citizen participation in local governance (Wampler, 2007). However, in the context of Africa, Boulding and Wampler (2010) note that participatory budgeting has yielded more modest results owing to lack of civic awareness, poor civil society organizations and the compliance approach often adopted by local authorities to implement the tool. These experiences make me wonder about the quality of the budget consultation processes in Bindura Urban Council.

CD Committees and Residents Associations are informal but equally significant means through which communities participate in local government. In the case of Zimbabwe, the Residents Associations have taken root as key actors in civil society who lobby for the interests of communities, oversee council activities, and interact with local councils on behalf of residents. As highlighted by Kurebwa (2015), in places where the Residents Association is strong and organized, it plays the role of balancing the influence of elites on local government, thus providing room for authentic community participation. The significance of these organizations in the Bindura scenario forms part of the research objectives.

2.6 Challenges to Community Participation in Local Governance

Many challenges are noted within the existing literature as barriers that hamper effective community participation in the practice of participatory governance in Zimbabwe. It is important to understand these barriers if we were to come up with strategies to support community participation in participatory governance in Bindura Urban Council.

One of the major barriers to community participation in local governance in Zimbabwe has been the intervention of politics. According to Mapuva (2015), the domination of political parties in the activities of local councils has been a key problem since ward councillors have become more interested in party allegiance than their accountability to communities. In essence, community participation becomes an affair of politics such that community members who are opposed to the ruling party are kept at arm's length.

The lack of sufficient civic awareness and knowledge about politics is yet another factor hampering the efficiency of the participation process. As pointed out by Goetz & Gaventa (2001), communities are unable to meaningfully participate in the governance process because of the fact that they lack awareness about their rights and the options available to them in terms of civic participation. The same observation applies when there has been little civic education, leading to low civic awareness among members of communities. Chatiza (2010) reported that decades of centralised governance in Zimbabwe have led to the emergence of a passive culture in urban areas, with local governments being viewed as service providers, rather than institutions where participation can take place.

The second participation challenge concerns the problem of gender participation gaps in civic engagement. Research conducted in the sub-Saharan region has indicated that the participation rates among women are low in local government as compared to men due to reasons such as the culture of the people, household chores, the absence of information, and male-dominated participation forums (Kurebwa, 2015). The problem of differential participation between women and men has been noted in the urban councils of Zimbabwe.

Limited resources for governance hinder participatory activities in communities and by councils. Olowu and Wunsch (2004) note that participation requires resources for civic education, communication, and facilitation services, which are lacking in many African local authorities. Zimbabwean urban councils, on the other hand, are facing difficulties due to economic challenges during the last two decades, thus leaving them unable to conduct participatory engagements.

2.7 Opportunities for Enhancing Community Participation in Local Governance

However, opportunities are also abound as the literature indicates in the quest to enhance participation of the community in the management of urban local councils. The 20l3 Zimbabwean Constitution is one such golden chance for enhancing the practice of participatory governance. According to Mapuva (20l5), there are numerous constitutional provisions on devolution, if accompanied by resource transfers from the central government and good political will at local levels, that would create a participatory governance system in Zimbabwe. The development of civil society groups and Resident Associations in urban Zimbabwe is also a great opportunity in the quest to promote participation of the community in the management of urban local councils.

According to Kurebwa (20l5), active civil societies play a pivotal role in mobilizing the community, instilling civic consciousness amongst the residents and making the urban local council accountable. In view of this, it means that strengthening the capacities of civil society organisations in Bindura can go a long way in promoting participation of the community in the affairs of the urban local council. Information and communications technology is also emerging as an important opportunity for improving the level of participation of the community in local governance systems, especially the younger generation. The use of e-governance systems in many countries worldwide has resulted in enhanced access to government information and feedback mechanisms for the citizens. While the ICTs may not be well developed in Zimbabwe, the fact that mobile telephony has reached the urban populace provides a fertile ground for communication between the council and the citizens.

2.8 Community Participation, Governance and Peace

Indeed, there is plenty of evidence to show the direct link between participatory governance systems and peaceful outcomes within such systems. Democratic peace theory stipulates that inclusive, legitimate and participatory governance is inherently more stable and peaceful than an exclusionary or

authoritarian system since it ensures that citizens' grievances are articulated and their decisions taken into account (Doyle, 1986). In the case of local governance, this means that local governance systems which are characterized by citizens' real involvement in decision-making are likely to prevent frustration that may lead to social conflict.

It has been argued by UNDP (2015) that participatory local governance forms a crucial foundation for peacebuilding efforts in situations of post-conflict societies or fragile states since it seeks to recreate the social contract between citizens and the state on the smallest scale possible. In a country like Zimbabwe where past political violence and mistrust remain an important component of the relationship between the citizens and the government, the extent of citizens' involvement in local governance processes becomes a matter of great significance not just with regard to improving service provision but also for fostering social cohesion and consolidating democratic peace.

2.9 Theoretical Framework

Two complementary theoretical frameworks are employed in the analysis of the quality and effectiveness of community participation in the Bindura Urban

Council: Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation and the Democratic Governance Theory.

The primary theory utilized in the analysis of the quality and depth of community participation in the Bindura Urban Council is Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation (1969). The eight-step ladder, ranging from non-participation through tokenism to citizen power, represents a conceptual framework for making diagnoses concerning the current level of participation practiced within Bindura Urban Council. Using this theory, the researcher can analyze the results of empirical research regarding the challenges and opportunities in relation to mechanisms of community participation.

Additionally, the study is underpinned by the Democratic Governance Theory developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP; 2015). It offers an understanding of community participation in terms of a system that involves the elements of democracy, such as accountability, responsiveness, transparency, inclusiveness, and the rule of law. In contrast to other theoretical frameworks in this area, Democratic Governance Theory is based on the notion that participatory governance needs to be supported by a governance culture. Based on this concept, it will serve as a normative standard for assessing the state of participatory governance in the Bindura Urban Council.

In sum, the use of the two theories mentioned above is justified by the need to conduct a thorough analysis of community participation in the Bindura Urban Council both at the micro and macro levels of investigation.

2.10 Summary

Literature review of the involvement of communities in local government was undertaken in this chapter by looking at various sources of academic works from both international, African, and Zimbabwean perspectives. From the review above, it has been revealed that there are major gaps in the literature concerning the experience of community participation in Bindura Urban Council. In addition, a theoretical framework has been identified for use in the study. Chapter four explains the methodology to be used in the study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Chapter three gives a detailed discussion on the methodology used in this research. The discussion will provide details on the research philosophy, research methodology and research design, population, sampling techniques and strategies, data collection techniques and strategies, measures of validity and reliability, presentation and analysis of data, ethical issues and pilot testing. The methodology in this chapter is based on the research objectives identified in Chapter One which seeks to investigate the mechanisms, obstacles and opportunities related to participation in local governance in Bindura Urban Council.

The methodology to be used in this study rests on interpretivist philosophy of research. Interpretivism emphasizes on the need for researchers to understand how social reality is formed and maintained through the processes of meanings, interpretations and experiences in human interaction (Creswell, 2014). Therefore, researches conducted under this philosophical perspective involve deep engagement with the subjective perceptions of the respondents. The chosen research philosophy fits the current study since participation in local governance is a social experience and it is impossible to fully comprehend the dynamics of such a process quantitatively only.

Participation in local governance, its mechanisms, obstacles and opportunities is inherently subjective. The opinions and feelings of residents and council officials about their experiences should be examined in depth before one can come to conclusions about them. In addition, interpretation philosophy aligns well with the theoretical framework in this study (Arnstein's 1969 Ladder of Citizen Participation). As already mentioned, this theory emphasizes the need to assess depth of participation qualitatively.

3.2 Research Methodology

The research adopts a qualitative methodology. The qualitative method seeks to understand a phenomenon from the point of view of those who experience it and is concerned with data that is descriptive and interpretative in nature rather than numerical. The use of qualitative methodology in this research is justified by several factors. First, the research questions seek to explore the how and why of participation of the community in Bindura Urban Council and not the extent to which this participation exists. Second, the research is based on the subjective interpretation of the experiences and perception of those who participated and those in charge of the community participation programs, and qualitative methodology would be able to help in capturing their perceptions. Third, a qualitative methodology allows the researcher flexibility in understanding the emerging issues in relation to the research problem.

Furthermore, qualitative methodology fits well into the research theoretical frame work. Both Democratic Governance Theory and Ladder of Citizen Participation by

Arnstein requires that the nature and quality of citizen participation be assessed qualitatively.

The research design refers to the general framework which a researcher puts in place as part of his/her plans for integrating various aspects of the research process. Some of the research designs include case study, experiment, and survey.

The research design for this study is case study design. Case study research design entails the examination of some phenomenon in a real life setting and in such a way that the researcher develops in depth understanding of a phenomenon (Yin, 2014). The case study design is quite suitable for this study since it will enable the researcher to examine the issue of community participation in local governance as it exists within a specific institution namely, the Bindura Urban Council.

It will give the researcher an opportunity to explore many sources of data such as interview transcripts, focus group discussions transcripts and documents related to the subject under investigation thereby enabling the researcher to triangulate his/ her data and come up with reliable findings. Moreover, Yin (2014) noted that case study is best suited for answering the how and why type of questions and in this case, the research question for this study is exploratory..

3.3 Research Design

3.4 Target Population

The target population refers to the entire group of individuals or elements that the researcher intends to study and from which a sample is drawn.

In this study, the target population consisted of stakeholders involved in or affected by community participation in Bindura Urban Council. These included:

- Council officials
- Ward councillors
- Community members
- Civil society organisations
- Residents' associations

These groups were targeted because they possess relevant knowledge and experiences regarding participatory governance.

3.4 Sample

A sample refers to a subset of the population selected for participation in the study.

In this study, a sample of **30 participants** was selected using purposive sampling. The sample included:

- 5 council officials
- 5 ward councillors
- 15 community members
- 5 civil society representatives

This sample ensured representation of both institutional and community perspectives.

3.5 Sampling Methods

The research uses two sampling techniques, which include purposive sampling and snowball sampling. The use of purposive sampling technique involves selecting those officials of the council and ward councillors who are directly involved in community participation process. Therefore, they will have enough knowledge and experience to answer the questions put forward by the study. Bryman (2016) noted that purposive sampling is the best technique for conducting qualitative research when the researcher is after information-rich cases and not statistical representativeness.

Snowball sampling technique involves the identification and recruitment of community members who are experienced in participatory governance process of Bindura Urban Council. In this technique, the researcher is asked by the initial respondents to contact more people who will fit the requirements of the study

(Creswell, 2014). In essence, this means that a researcher begins with an initial group of people who will then lead him to contact many other relevant members. This technique enables the researcher to get in touch with some community members who cannot easily be contacted through conventional procedures but have experience in the processes of council participation.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

In this study, there are three ways of data collection used. These include conducting interviews, focus group discussions, and analyzing documents. Utilizing more than one way to collect data ensures triangulation and improves the reliability of the results generated by the study (Yin, 2014).

3.6.1 In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews are conducted with council officials, ward councillors, and civil society representatives. In-depth interviews are particularly appropriate for collecting detailed, nuanced data from individuals who occupy specific institutional roles and possess specialised knowledge of community participation processes in

Bindura Urban Council. The interviews are semi-structured, guided by an interview schedule that is developed from the study's research questions but allowing sufficient flexibility for participants to raise issues and perspectives not anticipated by the researcher. Bryman (2016) argued that semi-structured interviews are the most appropriate format for qualitative research because they balance the need for thematic consistency across interviews with the flexibility to capture the full richness of participants' experiences and perspectives.

Each interview lasts approximately 45 to 60 minutes and is conducted at a time and location convenient to the participant. With the informed consent of participants, interviews are audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed for analysis. A total of fifteen in-depth interviews are conducted, covering the five council officials, five ward councillors, and five civil society representatives in the sample.

In-depth interviews are held with the council officials, ward councillors, and civil society members. In-depth interviews are the most suitable method for obtaining rich information from people who hold certain positions within particular institutions and have special knowledge regarding community participation in the case of Bindura Urban Council. These interviews are semi-structured and follow a predetermined interview schedule which is designed according to research questions posed by the study. However, it should be noted that some room must be left to allow interviewees to address topics and issues beyond the scope of researcher's expectations. As Bryman (2016) notes, semi-structured interviews provide the best way to conduct qualitative research.

The duration of the interview is about 45-60 minutes; it is arranged at a place convenient to the interviewee. With their consent, the interview is recorded using an audio recorder and then transcribed for the purpose of further analysis. The total number of such interviews is fifteen – five for each type of respondents.

3.6.2 Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions are held with the community members where collective views on issues to do with participation of communities in governance are sought among the residents of Bindura. Focus group discussions prove especially useful when examining community members' collective perceptions regarding issues that they experience as individuals, since such perceptions reveal many more aspects, such as social norms and community dynamics (Morgan, 1997). Three focus group discussions are undertaken, each of which comprises of five community members from different wards. The three groups are formed in such a way that they comprise women, youths, and elderly people of Bindura.

Each focus group discussion takes about 60-90 minutes during which discussion proceeds through a prepared focus group discussion guide based on the research questions posed. Each discussion is tape-recorded and transcribed. A research assistant aids the researcher in conducting focus group discussions.

3.6.3 Documentary Analysis

Analysis of documents is performed as part of additional data collection in order to enhance information obtained from interviewees and from focus groups. The types of documents analyzed in this regard include Bindura Urban Council meeting minutes, annual reports, budget documents, and documents on community consultations. Other documents include national documents, such as the Constitution of Zimbabwe (2013), Urban Councils Act Chapter 29:15, and the National Development Strategy l (202l-2025). As stated by Bowen (2009), documentary analysis is an important tool in addition to data from interviews and focus groups in case studies since the documents offer an independent perspective of institution-based processes and decision-making processes.

3.7 Research Instruments

The main tools of research that will be utilised in conducting this research include an in-depth interview guide, a focus group discussion guide, and a documentary analysis checklist. The in-depth interview guide will consist of openended questions arranged thematically according to the research question in each theme and will include questions about how community participation takes place within the Bindura Urban Council, what factors impede effective community participation, and what can be done to enhance community participation.

The focus group discussion guide will include open-ended questions and discussion topics to encourage collective community views about how community participation works in the council, what factors impede effective community participation, and what can be done to improve community participation. The documentary analysis checklist will be utilised to systematically

review information from various council documents and national policies regarding community

participation.

3.8 Pilot Testing

Before the actual data collection activity, the research instruments will be pilot tested on two members of the community and one member of the local council who are not part of the research samples. Pilot testing will allow for the determination of any possible ambiguities or technical problems in the research instruments before their use in the actual data collection process. Creswell (2014) noted that pilot testing was necessary in the process of developing qualitative research instruments as it improved the effectiveness of such instruments. The feedback gained from pilot testing is used to develop and finalise the research instruments for use in data collection.

3.9 Validity and Reliability

While validity indicates the degree to which an experiment or research studies measure what they purport to measure, reliability refers to the ability of the study results to be consistently reproduced over time.

In qualitative research, the concepts of validity and reliability are dealt with in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The concept of credibility (qualitative equivalent of internal validity) is attained via triangulation of data sources and methods, member checking through which respondents are allowed

to evaluate the accuracy of their responses that were transcribed for analysis, and prolonged engagement with the research site. The aspect of transferability (equivalent of external validity in qualitative research) is attained via providing a detailed account of the research environment and results to allow readers to make judgments regarding the relevance of the research results to other similar settings.

Dependability (equivalent of reliability in qualitative research) is achieved by keeping a thorough record of all aspects of the research including the process of developing instruments, collecting and analyzing data, and presenting results.

Confirmability (the equivalent of objectivity in qualitative research) is achieved through a technique known as reflexivity in which the researcher analyzes his or her background, assumptions, and personal perspectives on the research problem and processes and results.

3.10 Data Presentation and Analysis

Thematic analysis is used in the analysis of the qualitative data obtained from this study. Thematic analysis entails the identification, organization, and interpretation of patterns of meaning (themes) present in the qualitative data set (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Six stages are involved in the process of thematic analysis according to Braun and Clarke (2006). These stages include familiarization with the data through multiple readings of the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes involving the identification of potentially related codes and their collation into thematic categories, reviewing themes to make sure they reflect patterns in the data, defining and naming themes, and finally producing the final thematic analysis.

The themes emerging through the thematic analysis will be organized around the research questions posed at the onset of this research. The themes include those concerned with the mechanisms for community participation in Bindura Urban Council, the constraints that affect participation and the opportunities for improvement. Quotations drawn from the interviews and FGDs will be included to exemplify themes, and the participants' identities protected through the use of pseudonyms. Documentation will form part of the data for thematic analysis as evidence to reinforce findings from interviews and FGDs. The analysis will be done manually since qualitative data analysis software is not necessary for this study.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards have been strictly adhered to in planning, data collection, analysis, and dissemination of findings. Ethical clearance is sought from the Department of Peace and Governance at Bindura University of Science Education prior to the start of data collection. Permission to conduct research in Bindura Urban Council is sought from the Town Clerk while permission to interact with community members is sought from respective ward councillors.

Consent from all participants is sought before their participation in the study. A written information sheet is issued to all participants detailing the purpose of the study, their role in the study, the voluntary nature of participation, right to withdraw from the study without any penalty, measures to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of participants and the purpose of obtaining informed consent. Participants sign a consent form agreeing to the above conditions before commencement of data collection.

The confidentiality and anonymity of the participants will be ensured throughout the study by giving each participant a pseudonym name. The names of the participants will not feature anywhere in the research report. The audio recordings and transcripts will be stored in a safe place accessible only to the researcher and supervisor. After the five-year retention period, data will be destroyed.

In addition, the researcher is aware that some research topics might be sensitive depending on their relevance to political participation and councilcommunity relations in Bindura. The researcher is keen on creating a comfortable research

environment for the participants so that they can freely express themselves without the risk of suffering any political or societal sanctions.

3.12 Summary

The research methodology used in the study has been discussed in detail in the preceding chapter. This chapter focuses on the research philosophy, research methodology, research design, sampling strategy, data collection techniques such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis, the data analysis technique adopted for analyzing the data collected, and the ethical issues associated with the conduct of research. The objective of the research methodology is to produce meaningful data in order to achieve the research objectives set out in the research question(s)

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the research methodology employed in this study. This chapter presents, analyses, and discusses the findings of the study on community participation in local governance in Bindura Urban Council. The presentation of research findings and discussions is organized according to the study's three research objectives, which were to examine the mechanisms used by Bindura Urban Council to facilitate community participation in local governance decisionmaking processes, to investigate the challenges that hinder effective community participation in local governance in Bindura Urban Council, and to assess the opportunities available for enhancing community participation in local governance in Bindura Urban Council. The chapter is arranged as follows: firstly, the chapter presents the demographic characteristics of the research participants, then moves on to present, analyse, and discuss the gathered responses thematically in relation to the research objectives and questions.

4.2 Biodata

This section discusses the demographic characteristics of the participants of this study. The considered characteristics were gender, age, category of participants and length of residence or service in Bindura. The demographic information of the participants is important because it allows the researcher to identify trends amongst participants based on their demographic

characteristics, and to contextualise the findings in the broader social and institutional landscape of Bindura Urban Council.

4.2.1 Gender

Fig 4.1 below presents the gender distribution of the thirty research participants.

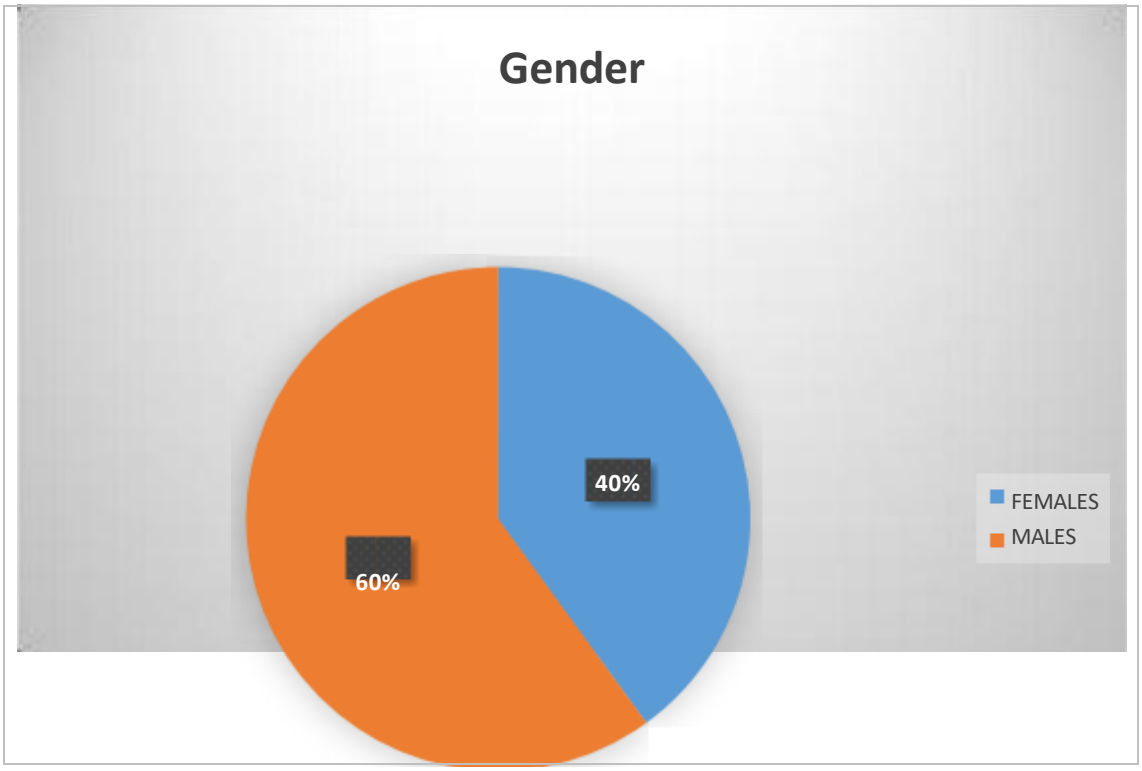


Figure 4.1: Gender distribution of participants (N=30)

Fig 4.1 shows that the majority of participants, 18 (60%), were male while 12 (40%) were female. The gender distribution of participants reflects the broader pattern of male dominance in formal community participation spaces in Bindura Urban Council, consistent with the literature reviewed in Chapter Two which documented gender disparities in civic participation across

Zimbabwean urban local authorities. The relatively lower representation of female participants underscores the structural barriers that limit women's engagement in local governance processes in Bindura. The findings showed that gender plays a significant role in determining who participates in community governance processes, with women systematically excluded from formal participatory spaces due to cultural norms, domestic responsibilities, and the masculine character of ward meeting environments.

4.2.2 Age

Table 4.l below presents the age distribution of the research participants.

Age Group (Years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
l8-25	4	l3
26-35	7	23
36-45	l0	34
46 and above	9	30
Total	30	l00%

Table 4.1: Age of Participants (N=30) 1

Table 4.l below indicates that most participants, l0 (34%), were in the age category of 36 to 45 years old, whereas the fewest participants, 4 (l3%), were in the age category of l8 to 25 years old. This trend demonstrates how there are many

middle aged and older residents taking part in community participation within Bindura Urban Council, with no younger residents taking part in the participatory process. As shown by the results, age category plays a significant role in conducting research since this helps the researcher see how participation differs in each age category as well as learn why younger residents are unable to participate effectively in the local governance process within Bindura.

4.2.3 Category of Participants

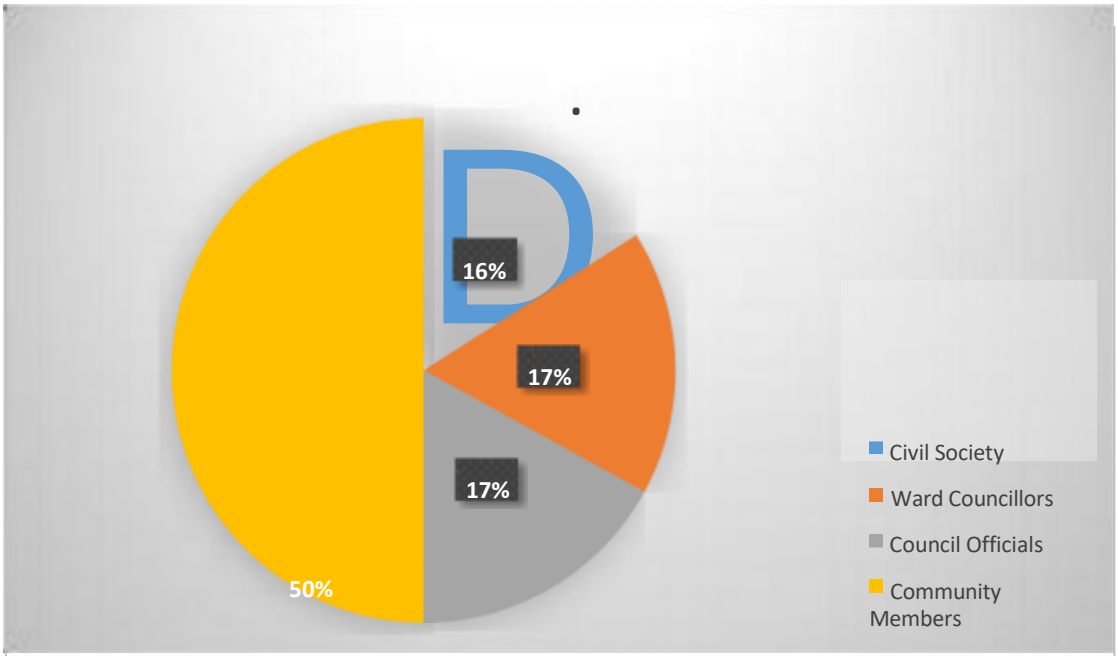


Fig 4.2 shows that the majority of participants 15 (50%) were community members who participated through focus group discussions, while council officials, ward councillors, and civil society representatives each constituted 5 participants. This diverse participant profile ensures that the findings represent a comprehensive range of stakeholder perspectives on community participation in Bindura Urban Council. The findings indicated that categorising participants by their institutional role is essential in understanding the multi-dimensional nature of community participation in Bindura Urban Council.

4.2.4 Length of Residence or Service

Table 4.2 below presents the distribution of participants by length of residence or service.

Duration	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 5 years	4	13
5-10 years	8	27
11-20 years	11	37
More than 20 years	7	23
Total	30	100%

Table 4.2: Length of Residence/Service 1

Table 4.2 shows that the majority of participants 11 (37%) had lived or served in Bindura for between 11 and 20 years, indicating that most participants have extensive knowledge of and experience with local governance processes in Bindura Urban Council, enhancing the credibility and depth of the data generated.

4.3 Mechanisms Used to Facilitate Community Participation

The first research objective sought to examine the mechanisms used by Bindura Urban Council to facilitate community participation in local

governance decision-making processes. The thematic analysis revealed three primary mechanisms namely ward meetings, budget consultation processes, and Community Development Committees. Fig 4.4 below presents the results on the effectiveness of these mechanisms as rated by participants.

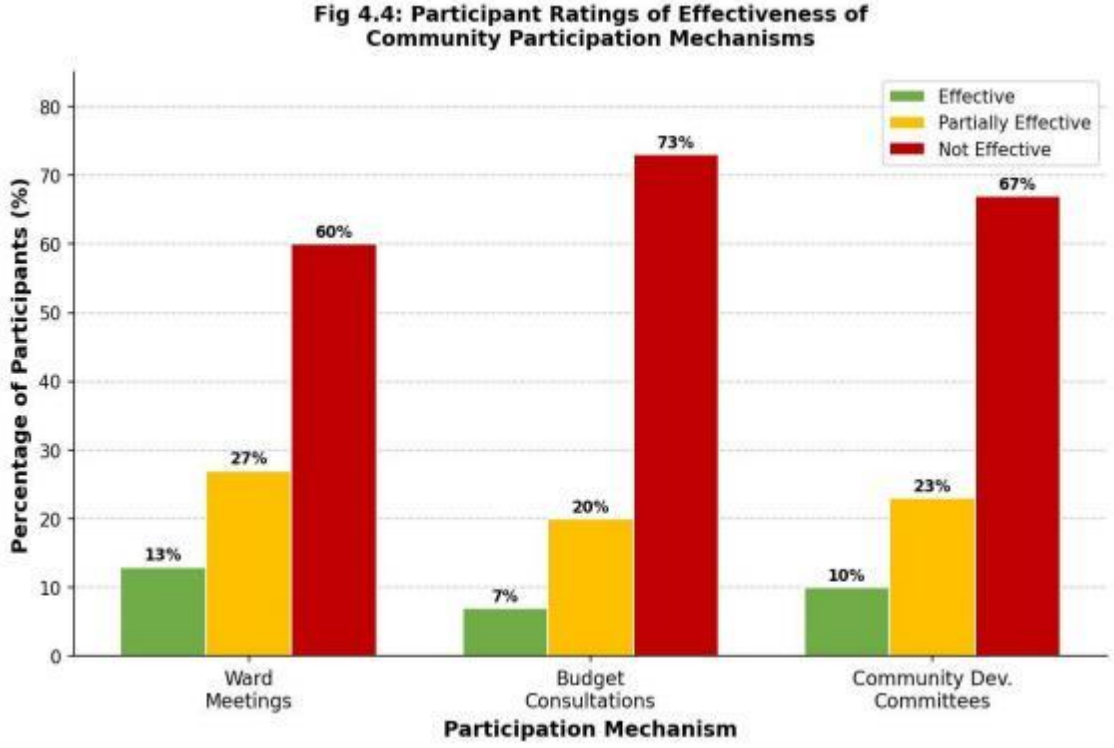


Fig 4.4 indicated that the majority of participants rated all three mechanisms as not effective. Budget consultations were rated not effective by 73% of participants, Community Development Committees by 67%, and ward meetings by 60%. Only 13% of participants rated ward meetings as effective, 10% rated Community Development Committees as effective, and 7% rated budget consultations as effective. The findings showed that while Bindura Urban Council has formal participation mechanisms in

place, their practical contribution to meaningful participatory governance is severely limited. These results are consistent with Arnstein's (1969) Ladder of Citizen Participation, which places the council's participatory practices predominantly at the tokenism level of informing and consultation rather than at higher levels of genuine citizen power. The three mechanisms are discussed in detail below.

4.3.1 Ward Meetings

The most common means of formal community participation in Bindura Urban Council were ward meetings. All five ward councillors indicated that ward meetings are held in their respective wards, although the frequency was quite irregular in most cases. According to the Urban Councils Act Chapter 29:15, ward councillors have to organize regular meetings, where residents could voice any problems they may have, discuss council's activities, and contribute to development planning process. But as it transpired during the study, there was a clear discrepancy between the legal requirements and reality in the case of ward meetings in Bindura. One of the ward councillors mentioned:

" *Ward meetings should ideally be organized monthly, but as practice shows, we call for meetings only when there is an urgent message to deliver to residents. At times we organize about three or four meetings per year, which is definitely too few for meaningful dialogue. (Ward Councillor).*

It became evident that ward meetings in Bindura take place quite infrequently and are conducted much less often than once per month, as the Urban Councils Act requires. Participants expressed dissatisfaction both regarding the frequency of such meetings, and how they were organized. One of the participants in a focus group discussion said:

"When we attend ward meetings, we are simply informed of what has already been decided; no one asks us what we think. We get the same report from the councillor that is ready before our meeting starts, and there is absolutely no chance to put our questions forward. (Community Member, Focus Group Discussion 1).

Community members were unhappy that they were denied the right to participate in any discussions at ward meetings. Another participant mentioned:

"Ward meetings in our ward resemble political gatherings rather than discussions in communities. People who don't belong to the ruling party find themselves out of place, and consequently, stop attending those meetings. (Community Member, Focus Group Discussion 2)."

The above results reveal that the ward meetings in Bindura Urban Council are conducted mainly as channels for dissemination of information but not as a forum for deliberation involving community members. This finding is consistent with Nhema's (2016) observations about the infrequency of holding ward meetings in urban councils in Zimbabwe and their being more of administrative convenience than community engagement efforts. Further substantiation comes from document analysis showing that the number of meetings ranged from two to four per year for each ward during the period from 2020 to 2023. This is also evident from the responses given by the civil society actors in regard to lack of follow-up actions on community grievances aired during ward meetings.

4.3.2 Budget Consultation Processes

Budget consultations emerged as the second formal method used by Bindura Urban Council through which it is supposed to involve communities in governance decisions. From the information provided by the council's finance department, budget

consultations take place every year in line with provisions of the Urban Councils Act. Nevertheless, the findings indicated numerous discrepancies between formal arrangements and actual implementation of budget consultations. As one council official said:

"We carry out our budget consultations every year in compliance with the law, but the problem is that very few people come. We post notices on billboards in our offices, but most of the residents don't even bother checking if there are any such events happening. Those few people who attend are always the same, civil society activists and a few community organizers. (Council Official).

The analysis of results suggested that budget consultations are characterized by lack of effective promotion and low participation of communities. Most community members admitted they knew little about such meetings. For example, one focus group discussion participant said:

"I have been living in Bindura for over ten years now and nobody ever informed me about budget consultations meetings. Nobody has ever contacted me personally inviting me to make recommendations on spending of my money. (Community Member, Focus Group Discussion 2).

At the same time, another participant mentioned that residents could attend budget consultations but without much deliberation taking place:

"I once attended one budget consultation and saw how the council officers presented a printed budget that was ready. They just read it and asked whether we had

any questions. They had obviously reached their decisions elsewhere. (Community Member, Focus Group Discussion 3).

It was noted that budget consultations at Bindura Urban Council are superficial activities in which communities are brought in for the purpose of validating the pre- conceived resolutions rather than being deliberative in terms of discussing budget

priorities. This is in line with the research findings of Nhema (2016), where budget consultations within Zimbabwean urban councils have been observed to be an approval mechanism for the resolutions which had already been passed by the council members. In a similar vein, Boulding and Wampler (2010) established that budget participation in Africa has often been associated with low impact because of low community awareness as well as the unwillingness of officials to use budget participation as a mechanism for participatory democracy. The analysis of document materials revealed that attendance during annual budget consultations was usually less than thirty people from the community.

4.3.3 Community Development Committees

Lastly, Community Development Committees were cited by ward councillors as another means through which citizens are involved in the decision-making process in Bindura Urban Council. Nevertheless, the results indicated that the roles of the committees, the nature of their membership, and their schedule were vaguely defined. In response to one of the interview questions, one of the civil society representatives explained that:

"Community Development Committees in Bindura do not hold any standing with the council's governance system. They do not have legal powers to enforce the council's actions regarding their recommendations. What ends up happening is that the community development committees meet, they provide their recommendations, and then nothing happens. Citizens become disappointed and stop attending meetings, hence the committee fizzles out. (Civil Society Representative)"

The results indicated that Community Development Committees lack the institutional power to ensure their effectiveness as means for citizen involvement. Similarly, one of the ward councillors made a similar observation about the lack of institutional strength of the committees:

"The Community Development Committee in my ward only meets when we are able to organize for them to come. Sometimes the recommendations of the committee are not taken seriously by the council because there is no binding requirement for the council to react to their decisions."

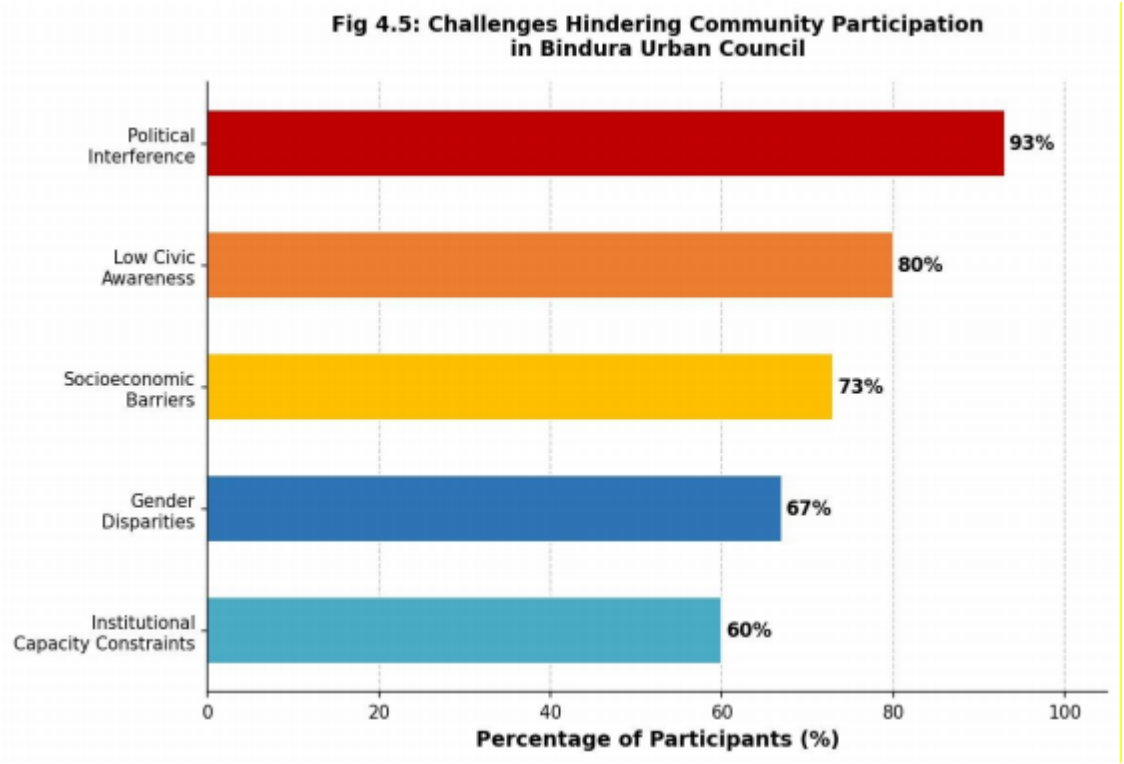
Those who have been members of committees were frustrated at the lack of visible achievements in this regard:

'For two years I was a member of the Community Development Committee. We had discussions, we noted problems in the community and we gave recommendations to the council. But nothing happened. So after a while you start wondering whether it is worth the effort. (Community Member, Focus Group Discussion 1).

In other words, the findings indicated that Community Development Committees in Bindura Urban Council are more of consultative forums for discussing problems rather than actual tools of community empowerment. The observations correlate with the insights offered by Cornwall (2008) regarding different types of participation spaces – those which empower communities and those which pretend to engage people yet retain power relations intact. In combination, the findings concerning all three participatory mechanisms confirm the pattern where institutional participation structures exist without actual community empowerment.

4.4 Challenges Hindering Effective Community Participation

The second research objective entailed exploring the challenges that stand in the way of effective community participation in local governance in Bindura Urban Council. Thus, the relevant research question was posed as follows: What challenges hinder effective community participation in local governance in Bindura Urban Council? The thematic analysis yielded five main challenges. They are presented in Fig. 4.5 below.



As can be seen from Fig 4.5, political influence ranked highest with 93% while low civic awareness was second at 80%. Socioeconomic challenges were rated third at 73%, followed by gender issues at 67%, and institutional limitations fourth at 60%. The implications of these research findings show that all five challenges mentioned have combined to affect the efficacy of citizen involvement in Bindura

Urban Council. This conclusion conforms to similar studies done in the general field of participatory democracy in urban local authorities in Zimbabwe (Chatiza, 2010; Mapuva, 2015), where there is still a yawning gap between the constitutionally enshrined right to participate and the reality of urban life.

4.4.1 Political Interference

Political interference was the most widespread and devastating barrier to effective participation by the community in Bindura Urban Council, recognized by 93% of respondents. Ward councillors in all five wards, as well as the majority of community members, indicated that political parties' influence takes over the ward meeting places and processes of decision making in the council.

'Basically, what happens is that everything is political in the ward; when one organizes ward meetings, people attend depending on their political affiliation. In case an individual is perceived as supporting the opposition, he will not feel at home at such ward meetings. There are councillors who take advantage of such meetings for campaign purposes. (Ward Councillor)

Analysis revealed that one's political affiliation plays a key role in determining whether individuals have access to participatory venues within Bindura Urban Council, hence the exclusion of politically disaffiliated residents from such venues. Focus group interviews reinforced that community

members were very frustrated with the issue of political

interference.

"'I have not attended ward meetings for quite some time now. There are no safe zones for voicing your thoughts at those forums. The wrong group of people couldtake offense at what you say, thus you could end up being exposed to serious problems. Hence, people remain quiet or simply choose not to attend the meetings.

This is not participation; it is silence.' (Community Member, Focus Group Discussion 3).

The study revealed that political intimidation has created an atmosphere of civic detachment among Bindura citizens who could otherwise actively participate in the area's governance and prefer to keep silent about their views because of the political risk involved. This finding is backed up by Mapuva (2015) who asserts that 'participation processes [in Zimbabwe] have been subverted by the politics of political domination' by parties within the local council arena of Zimbabwe and as such, has led to an environment where participation is used as a tool for political mobilization in lieu of democratic governance.

4.4.2 Low Civic Awareness

Low levels of civic awareness was the second major problem highlighted by 80% of the participants. It was evident from the results that a majority of the community members lack sufficient knowledge of their constitutional rights to engage in the decision-making processes at the local level, methods of participation and schedules

of the council meetings. For instance, one woman in the focus group discussion stated:

"I was not aware that as a citizen of the town, I am entitled to attend council meetings and express what I need for my community. I believed such a right is restricted to the councillors, senior government officers and some other important figures within the local government. No-one has ever informed me of my rights and privileges. (Community Member, Focus Group Discussion 1).

In addition, it became clear that civic education programmes are virtually nonexistent in Bindura council's programmes. One civil society representative stated:

"We conduct civic education seminars, but there is a limit as to how many people can be reached. However, the council does nothing meaningful about civic education. The council lacks any systematic effort to inform citizens of their right to participate in the governance process. (Civil Society Representative).

From the findings, it was evident that the lack of civic education has contributed to the development of civic passiveness among Bindura residents, resulting in low demand and poor quality of community participation. This finding supports the assertion made by Chatiza (2010) that decades of centralisation of governance in Zimbabwe have created a passive citizenry who view local authorities as providers of services and not a democratic structure in which citizens actively participate. Goetz and Gaventa (2001) similarly argue that meaningful participation is not possible without proper civic education.

4.4.3 Socioeconomic Barriers

"Socioeconomic barriers" was listed as another crucial obstacle encountered by 73% of respondents. According to the research findings, there are many residents of Bindura who experience considerable economic problems that make it impossible for them to engage in any form of community governance process. As one participant pointed out:

"If I attend a ward meeting during my working day I miss an entire day's wage. People like me who are trying to make ends meet selling various products simply cannot afford that loss of income. Council meets during our working hours, and then wonders why no one attends. (Community Member, Focus Group Discussion 2)

As shown by the research findings, the time chosen for community events tends to prevent lower-income groups, workers in the informal economy, as well as homemakers from taking part in them. Moreover, one respondent highlighted the issue of the cost of transport needed to get to meetings:

"I could attend some meeting organised at the council office but would still have to pay for transport. For those of us residing in outer wards, sometimes that is a price we cannot afford. Participation in the process thus becomes a privilege of those who have enough money. (Community Member, Focus Group Discussion 3)

From the above findings it is evident that socioeconomic barriers lead to the domination of wealthier people among participants in the community governance initiatives, thereby limiting their inclusiveness. The findings correspond to those by

Olowu & Wunsch (2004), who note that active participation implies time and resource investments, which economically disadvantaged people are unlikely to afford.

4.4.4 Gender Disparities

Another major challenge was gender inequalities, cited by 67% of respondents. It was found that there is an under-representation of women in formal participation processes in Bindura Urban Council. One participant pointed out:

"In ward meetings most of the people talking are men. Even if a woman attempts to talk to someone, she is dismissed because our culture does not allow women to play

such a role. Women find it embarrassing to engage in activities which they are not supposed to and prefer staying indoors rather than being humiliated. (Community Member, Focus Group Discussion 1)

From the findings, it was evident that the culture, domestic issues and the macho nature of the formal participation space contributed to excluding women from participation in the process. A woman participant further elaborated on domestic responsibilities hindering engagement:

"The ward meeting happens during the evenings while I am busy with my children; preparing food, bathing them and assisting with their studies. It's not meant for women having children. Nobody thought about these aspects while organizing the event. (Community Member, Focus Group Discussion 2)

It was found that despite being the majority group in the urban area of Bindura, women who have the largest stake in the council service delivery failure due to the nature of their household duties were systematically marginalized in the processes through which these services could be improved. The results support Kurebwa (2015), who identified women's under-representation in ward meetings and council deliberations as one of the major governance challenges in urban councils of Zimbabwe, as well as the sub-Saharan African literature on barriers to participation in civic engagement.

4.4.5 Institutional Capacity Constraints

Capacity challenges within the institution were cited as the fifth problem by 60% of the respondents. The study found out that the Bindura Urban Council does not have adequate financial, manpower, and logistics to support sustainable community involvement processes. A council official explained:

'Although we want to effectively engage the community, we lack capacity to achieve our goals. Our community services department lacks personnel. We don't have enough vehicles to access all the wards. We lack funding to develop appropriate communication material. The will is there but the capacity is not.' (Council Official)

It was established that the capacity challenge faced by the Bindura Urban Council is further exacerbated by the economic conditions prevalent in Zimbabwe whereby declining revenues bases of local governments mean that urban councils lack the required resources for community involvement processes. The results of the current study are consistent with Olowu and Wunsch (2004) who found out that for participation in governance to be successful, there must be investments made in facilitation capacity which is often lacking in many African local governments because of inadequate funding.

4.5 Opportunities for Enhancing Community Participation

The third research objective sought to assess the opportunities available for enhancing community participation in local governance in Bindura Urban

Council. The corresponding research question asked: What opportunities exist for enhancing community participation in local governance in Bindura Urban Council? The thematic analysis identified four significant opportunities. Fig 4.6 below presents the results on these opportunities as identified by participants.

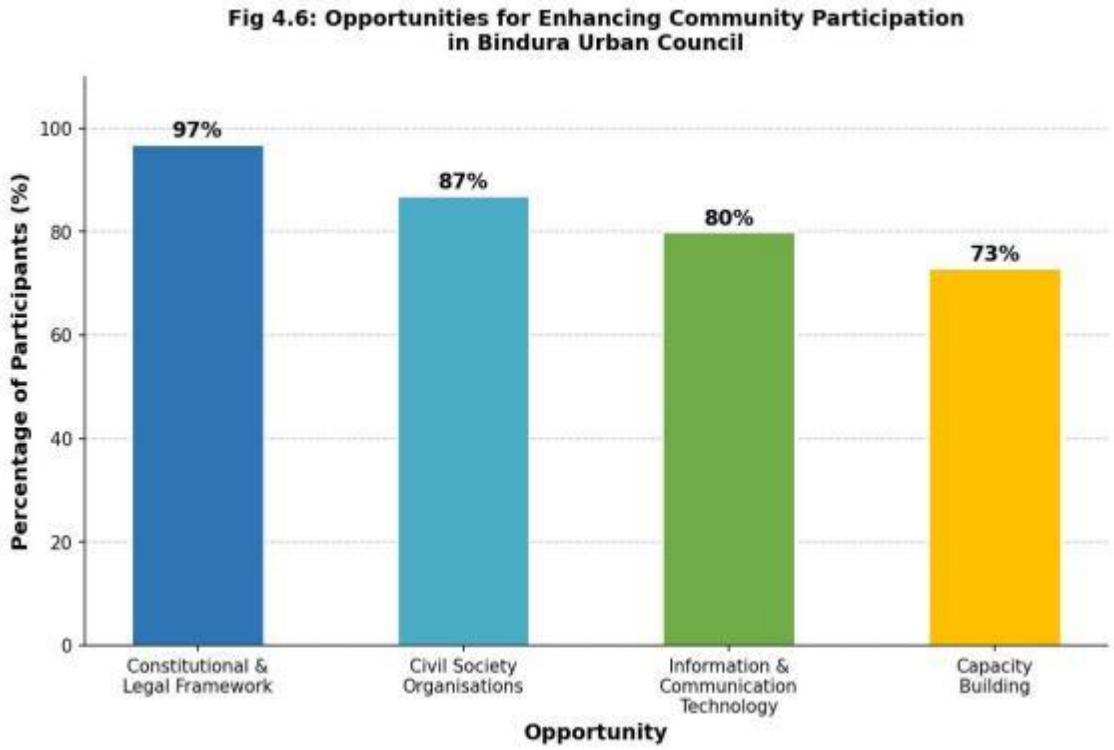


Fig 4.6 indicated that the constitutional and legal framework was identified as the most significant opportunity by 97% of participants, followed by the role of civil society organisations at 87%, information and communication technology at 80%, and capacity building at 73%. The findings showed that significant opportunities exist for improving community participation in Bindura Urban Council and that these opportunities are widely recognised by participants across

all stakeholder categories. Each opportunity is discussed in detail in the sub-sections below.

4.5.1 The Constitutional and Legal Framework

The Constitution of Zimbabwe in 20l3 was perceived as the greatest opportunity by 97% of respondents. According to the findings, there is a solid normative foundation provided by Section 264 of the Constitution, which stipulates that government powers should be devolved and community participation ensured at all levels. As stated by one of council officials,

"The Constitution has everything we need. Section 264 is quite clear – communities should be actively involved in all forms of governance. If only we had enough capacity to do what the Constitution says, our community participation practices in

Bindura would be completely different from what we have now." (Council Official)

According to the findings, the constitutional framework should be seen as the most effective but largely underutilized opportunity for enhancing the practices of participatory governance in Bindura. As stated by one of civil society representatives, "The Constitution is a very powerful document that can be used by communities to ensure their participation. Participation in governance is no longer considered a luxury – it is a right according to the Constitution. Community members should know about this right." (Civil Society Representative)

According to the findings, the constitutional and legal framework should be considered as the greatest opportunity for fostering transformation of community participation in Bindura Urban Council due to its strong normative content and possibility of using the rights provided by the Constitution to foster active participation. Such findings are consistent with Mapuva's (2015) statement that the constitutional framework of Zimbabwe opens up an enabling normative environment for participatory governance, which may give rise to a new dispensation in local authorities.

4.5.2 The Role of Civil Society Organisations

Organisations in Civil Society and Residents Associations have been pointed out as an opportunity for increased community participation by 87% of the respondents. According to the findings, Residents Associations are more trusted by community members compared to council mechanisms as well as offer neutral forums of interaction for citizens. In a particular focus group discussion, one participant said:

'The Residents Association is where we are free to voice our opinions. They hear us, and from there go and report on our behalf to the council. Unlike the ward meetings, these are not political. We trust the Residents Association much more than we do the ward councillor. (Community Member, Focus Group Discussion 3).

The findings reveal that organisations in civil society play a critical role in mediating between the communities and the council in terms of mobilizing communities and fostering civic awareness while ensuring accountability by the council on behalf of communities. Indeed, the findings echo those of Kurebwa (2015), where in cases where Residents Associations are organised, they act as counterbalancing forces to elite capture, thereby facilitating the practice of participatory governance.

4.5.3 Information and Communication Technology

This was cited by 80% of the participants as an untapped potential which could be tapped to encourage community participation in large numbers. The results indicated that the high penetration rates of mobile phones and social media in urban

Bindura presented realistic opportunities for communication between the council and the community that the council had not yet tapped into. According to one ward councillor:

"I started a WhatsApp group in my ward almost two years ago and I now have over 200 residents in that WhatsApp group. As I announce ward meetings on

WhatsApp, they turn up because they receive those announcements on their phones. The council needs to apply this strategy to all the wards (Ward Councillor).

The findings indicated that the use of ICT significantly enhances the awareness level and attendance rates of community participation in council engagement activities. Many of the community members concurred saying:

"If the council were to send us information on meetings and decisions they make through WhatsApp groups, we will get informed and participate in those meetings. Today everyone has phones. If you use ICT correctly, there are no excuses for citizens not being aware of what is going on with the council. (Community Member, Focus Group Discussion l)

From the results, the use of information and communication technology offers a very realistic and affordable avenue for encouraging the participation of community in council activities. These results concur with Chadwick (2003) who said that egovernance initiatives facilitate greater access by citizens to government information and opens up communication avenues thus reducing the costs of participation.

4.5.4 Capacity Building

Capacity Building was viewed as another important opportunity for improving community participation in Bindura Urban Council by 73% of the respondents.

Capacity building was found to be a very important factor that could improve the quality of participation if investments were made in developing community engagement capabilities among the staff of Bindura Urban Council, and raising awareness about participating in governance activities. In his response, one of the Bindura council officials admitted:

"Our staff need to have some basic training on how to organize community consultations, how to conduct ward meetings so that all citizens will participate, how to talk to various groups in the community. It is with proper training that our community participation will improve dramatically. (Council Official).

The study revealed that there were needs for capacity building not only at the institutional level but at the community level as well. In support of his claim, one of the ward councillors noted:

"I heard from people who participated in ward meetings that in Gweru City Council they provided training to councillors on how to run ward meetings correctly, on how to engage more women in discussion and prevent political interference during discussions. I think such training will be useful for us too. (Ward Councillor).

As a result, capacity building emerged as an important opportunity for improving community participation in Bindura. The results obtained by the researcher coincide with those reported in the literature, and show that training on civic education and community engagement is critical for increasing the quality of participation in African municipalities (Olowu & Wunsch, 2004).

4.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined, analyzed, and critically discussed the results of the study guided by the three research questions.

Firstly, research question one explored the strategies employed by the Bindura Urban Council in facilitating community participation. According to the findings, the council employs ward meetings, budget consultations, and Community Development Committees as official channels of participation. Nevertheless, the above-discussed methods are sporadic, mismanaged and ineffective; they serve merely as avenues of information dissemination. In other words, true participation remains tokenistic in nature and practice.

Secondly, research question two addressed the issues that impede the successful realization of community participation in Bindura Urban Council. The study established that political interference is the main issue that impedes open participation. Other important challenges included lack of civic consciousness, socioeconomic barriers that hinder people from attending meetings, gender barriers that disempower women, and lack of institutional capacity among other issues.

Thirdly, research question three highlighted the opportunities for increasing participation in the study area. The study found out that the constitutional/ legal provisions, civil society organizations, use of ICTs and capacity building were important opportunities for enhancing participatory governance.

Overall, the study shows that there is an existing mechanism for promoting participation; however, its performance is hampered by several challenges but, at the same time, there are important opportunities for increasing participation. The next chapter will outline the conclusion and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONSAND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the whole project as well as the findings concerning community participation in local governance in Bindura Urban Council. The study was researched towards examining the mechanisms used by Bindura Urban Council to facilitate community participation in local governance decision-making processes. The study also investigated the challenges that hinder effective community participation in local governance in Bindura Urban Council and assessed the opportunities available for enhancing community participation in local governance in Bindura Urban Council. The study was guided by Arnstein's (1969) Ladder of Citizen Participation and Democratic Governance Theory. Summary of key findings were presented in line with the specific objectives of the research. Conclusions were drawn from the overall findings of the research whilst recommendations were formulated on the basis of the analysis of respondents' views and data.

5.2 Summary

5.2.1 Summary of the Whole Project

Chapter One gave the introduction to the study, which highlighted the background of the study as well as the significance of the study. The purpose of the study, along with research questions and objectives ofthe study were also presented in that chapter. Chapter One then presented the definition of key terms along with the delimitations and limitations of the study.

Chapter Two pointed out the literature review, which highlighted views from secondary data sources used in shaping the study. The chapter showed the direction taken by previous researchers with interest in community participation in local governance in Zimbabwe and Africa more broadly. The purpose of the chapter was for the researcher to identify gaps in present literature as well as shape the research such that it adds value to prior research. More so, the chapter presented the theoretical framework to which the study is based, namely Arnstein's (1969) Ladder of Citizen Participation and Democratic Governance Theory.

Chapter Three provided the methodology followed in conducting the research. This involved information on the research philosophy, research design, target population, sampling techniques as well as the data collection tools and data analysis methods used in conducting the study. Furthermore, the chapter provided insight into the ethical considerations made reference to in conducting the study.

Chapter Four presented, analysed and discussed the findings of the research. Within this chapter data was presented in text, with the aid of tables, pie charts and graphs which were used to create a better understanding of the data. Findings were grouped into themes and sub-themes, consistent with the research objectives as well as research questions.

Chapter Five is the final chapter, which presents the whole study. The chapter presents the summary and conclusions drawn from the study. Additionally, the chapter also presents recommendations in terms of areas for action or programming as well as areas for future research.

5.2.2 Summary of Research Findings

The first objective was to examine the mechanisms used by Bindura Urban Council to facilitate community participation in local governance decision-making processes. The research revealed that Bindura Urban Council employs three primary mechanisms for community engagement, namely ward meetings, budget consultation processes, and Community Development Committees. However, all three mechanisms were found to be poorly implemented and limited in their practical contribution to meaningful participatory governance. The study revealed that the majority of participants rated all three mechanisms as not effective, with budget consultations receiving the lowest effectiveness rating at 73% followed by Community Development Committees at 67% and ward meetings at 60%. It was established that ward meetings are conducted less frequently with most wards conducting ward meetings between two and four times annually as opposed to monthly meetings as anticipated in the Urban Councils Act. It was also found out that the consultations regarding budget issues were not publicized properly. Communities would be invited to rubber stamp budgetary decision-making which had been made already without giving residents an opportunity to discuss priorities. It was established that Community Development Committees lack formal recognition within the governance structure of

the council thus having no power to make the council respond to the community suggestions.

In order to establish the challenges that exist towards effective community participation in local governance in Bindura Urban Council, the second research objective was pursued. Findings from the research revealed that there are five key challenges that affect community participation in Bindura Urban Council. Political interference is one of the greatest challenges towards community participation in the council where it is evident that there is dominance of political parties within the ward meetings thus denying those considered politically unaligned an opportunity to express themselves. Second among the challenges to community participation is low civic awareness since only 80% of respondents revealed that they know their rights to participate in local government governance. Economic factors and gender disparity were identified by 73% and 67% of respondents as the third and fourth greatest challenges respectively because they tend to exclude poorer individuals as well as women in the process of community participation. Lack of capacity to facilitate community participation within the council is the fifth greatest challenge.

The final objective was to establish the possibilities that existed for increasing the participation of communities in the governance of Bindura Urban Council. The findings revealed that there were four main possibilities that could enhance the participation of communities in Bindura Urban Council. The Constitution of Zimbabwe 2013 and the Urban Councils Act emerged as the first and most important possibility for increasing community participation, with 97% of respondents considering it so because of its normative nature for participatory governance, which has not been fully embraced by the council. Civil society organisations and Residents

Associations constituted the second most important opportunity identified by 87% of the respondents, who considered it important because it acts as a bridge between the community and the council. Thirdly, the possibilities provided by information and communication technology (ICT), especially mobile phones and social media platforms, emerged as another unexploited opportunity with 80% of respondents identifying ICT as one such possibility.

5.3 Conclusions

The first research question was on the mechanisms that Bindura Urban Council employs to enhance community participation in local governance decisionmaking processes. The findings indicate that despite Bindura Urban Council having mechanisms that are supposed to foster citizen participation in decision-making such as the ward meetings, budget consultations, and the Community Development Committees, all the mechanisms employed by the council operate at the lowermost ladder rung – tokenism according to Arnstein (1969)'s Ladder of Citizen Participation model. In other words, the council only informs and consults communities but does not share any decision-making powers with the people. Thus, Bindura Urban Council's mechanisms of citizen participation constitute an enormous mismatch between the ideals of the Constitution and the practices of governance within the council. Such practices work against the realization of sustainable development goals in the country. Particularly, the council's mechanisms of participation make it impossible for the institution to live up to its commitment under SDG 16 that advocates for peaceful and inclusive societies, as well as SDG 11 which promotes sustainable and inclusive human settlement. Therefore, it would be

misleading to refer to any participatory governance at Bindura Urban Council considering the provisions under Section 264 of the Zimbabwean Constitution.

The second research question was on the factors hindering effective community participation in local governance in Bindura Urban Council. The study concludes that political interference is a challenge that renders participation meaningless in the council as it turns the spaces supposed to be governed by democracy into political platforms where participation takes place only for the benefit of the ruling party. The effect of political interference together with low civic awareness levels, socioeconomic challenges, gender inequalities, and institutional capacity deficits results in the creation of a political environment in which citizens can participate in local governance decisions only when they align with political parties, are wealthy, and are male. This poses serious implications on SDGs 10 and 5 in particular because of the perpetuation of inequality and social exclusion of women from participation in governance. In addition, political intimidation results in the creation of situations that make possible social conflicts between residents and the council due to poor relations.

Research question three concerned opportunities available to strengthen community participation in local governance in Bindura Urban Council. The conclusion drawn in this respect was that there were indeed very realistic opportunities that would help transform community participation in the Bindura Urban Council. Such opportunities include the full exploitation of the constitutional provision regarding devolution of power, development of civil society organizations and residents associations, use of ICT tools, as well as building capacities among the staff of the council as well as the community members. What needs to be noted here is

that taking advantage of such opportunities will not involve creating any new laws or institutions since what is necessary is mobilizing the political will to operationalize already existing provisions of the constitution as well as participatory governance. In this respect, therefore, it may be stated that if the opportunities presented above are capitalized upon by the council, Ministry of Local Government and Public Works, civil society organizations, and the community members themselves, Bindura Urban Council has great potentials to go past mere tokenistic participation and reach higher levels as per Arnstein's (1969) ladder of citizen participation.

5.4 Recommendations

In light of the findings of this research, it is strongly recommended that Bindura Urban Council develop and implement a community engagement policy aimed at creating mandatory and regularly monitored standards and benchmarks for all the community participation strategies employed by the Council. The community engagement process should be clearly documented and the findings thereof communicated regularly to community members.

It was discovered that political interference is the single most persistent challenge to effective community participation at Bindura Urban Council. It is recommended that the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works develop a set of clear guidelines separating the activities of political parties from community participation. Ward meetings and other forms of community participation should be conducted as non-political forums open to all citizens.

The lack of civic awareness amongst the residents of Bindura was seen to be a challenge to effective community participation. Therefore, it is recommended that the

Bindura Urban Council, in conjunction with development partners such as civil society organizations, should undertake an elaborate civic education campaign in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare to sensitize all residents, particularly women and youth on their constitutional right to community participation in governance.

Socioeconomic barriers, as well as gender disparity, have been found to be key barriers to effective community participation in Bindura Urban Council. In order to overcome this barrier, it is recommended that the council develop gender-sensitive, as well as economically inclusive, policies for community participation. In this regard,

meetings must be held in such a way that women and men are able to attend. In particular, women-only community consultations should be conducted if necessary.

Information and communication technology was found to be very important as a means through which communities can effectively be engaged and involved in the development process. Therefore, it is recommended that a digital community engagement strategy be developed, whereby community participation is publicized, facilitated, and documented via mobile phone and social media platforms.

Finally, this research has found that institutional capacity constraint is a critical issue that constrains the frequency and effectiveness of community participation initiatives. It is recommended that the Bindura Urban Council collaborate with development agencies and the central government in developing and implementing a comprehensive capacity building program. Such a program would train facilitators in skills of civic communication and community participation.

5.5 Topics for Further Research

l. **A Comparative Study of Community Participation in Urban Local Authorities in Zimbabwe**

   This study would examine community participation across multiple urban councils in Zimbabwe to identify best practices and broader systemic patterns in participatory governance.

2. **A Gender-Focused Study on Women's Participation in Local Governance in Bindura Urban Council**

This research would explore the specific barriers and enabling factors affecting women's participation, with the aim of generating gender-responsive strategies for improving inclusive governance.

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APPENDIX A :

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT OF PEACE AND GOVERNANCE

INSTRUMENT 1: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR COUNCIL OFFICIALSAND WARD COUNCILLORS

Introduction

I am B223237B, a fourth-year student at Bindura University of Science Education pursuing a Bachelor of Science Honor's Degree in Peace and Governance. I am conducting a research study titled CHALLENGESAND OPPORTUNITIES IN COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN ZIMBABWE: A CASE STUDY OF BINDURA TOWN COUNCIL. I am kindly requesting your assistance by providing information relevant to this study. The information gathered will be used for academic purposes only and will be treated with the strictest confidentiality. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without consequence.

Instructions:

Please answer all questions as honestly and as fully as possible. There are no right or wrong answers. Your views and experiences are what matter most to this study.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. What is your gender?

Male	Female	Prefer not to say

2. What is your age group?

Below 25 years	26-35 years	36-45 years	46 years and above

3. What is your highest level of education?

O Level	A Level	Degree	Postgraduate

4. How long have you served in your current role at Bindura Urban Council?

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SECTION B: MECHANISMS FOR COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

SA=Strongly Agree A=Agree N/S=Not Sure DA=Disagree SDA=Strongly Disagree

	SA	A	N/S	DA	SDA
5. Bindura Urban Council holds regular ward meetings that allow community members to participate in local governance decisions.					
6. The council conducts budget consultations that genuinely involve community members in financial planning processes.					
7. Community Development Committees in Bindura serve as effective platforms for community engagement with the council.					

SECTION B: MECHANISMS FOR COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

8. The council uses multiple communication channels to inform residents about participation opportunities.					

9. Ward councillors effectively					
bridge the gap between community members and council decisionmaking processes.					

10. In your view, how effective are the current mechanisms used by Bindura Urban Council to facilitate community participation? Please explain.

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11. What specific steps does the council take to ensure that community inputs from ward meetings are incorporated into council decisions?

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SECTION C: CHALLENGES HINDERING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Please indicate whether the following challenges apply to community participation in Bindura Urban Council. (Tick where applicable)

	Yes	No
l2. Political interference negatively affects the quality of community participation in Bindura Urban Council.		
l3. Low levels of civic awareness among residents limit meaningful community participation in council processes.		
l4. Socioeconomic barriers such as poverty and time constraints prevent many residents from participating in council activities.		
l5. Gender disparities result in women being underrepresented in community participation processes.		
l6. Institutional capacity constraints within the council limit the frequency and quality of community engagement activities.		

SECTION C: CHALLENGES HINDERING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

17. The timing of ward meetings and council consultations is inconvenient for most community		
members.		
18. Residents feel intimidated or unsafe when expressing dissenting views at ward meetings.		

19. In your experience, which of the above challenges is the most significant barrier to effective community participation in Bindura Urban Council? Please explain why.

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SECTION D: OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

20. In your opinion, what opportunities exist for improving community participation in local governance in Bindura Urban Council?

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21. How can Zimbabwe's constitutional provisions on devolution be better utilised to strengthen community participation in Bindura Urban Council?

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22. What role can civil society organisations and Residents Associations play in improving community participation in Bindura Urban Council?

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23. Do you think information and communication technology such as mobile phones and social media can be used to enhance community participation in the council?

Please explain.

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24. What specific recommendations would you make to improve community participation in local governance in Bindura Urban Council?

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Thank you for your time and valued contributions to this study.

APPENDIX B:

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT OF PEACE AND GOVERNANCE

INSTRUMENT 2: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Introduction

I am B223237B, a fourth-year a student at Bindura University of Science Education pursuing a Bachelor of Science Honor's Degree in Peace and Governance. I am conducting a research study titled CHALLENGESAND OPPORTUNITIES IN

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN ZIMBABWE: A CASE STUDY OF BINDURA TOWN COUNCIL. This focus group discussion seeks to gather your collective views and experiences on community participation in local governance in Bindura. The discussion will last approximately 60 to 90 minutes. All contributions are confidential and will be used for academic purposes only. There are no right or wrong answers; your honest views and experiences are most valuable to this study.

Instructions:

Please feel free to speak openly and honestly. All participants are encouraged to contribute. Please respect the views of other participants even where you may disagree.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANTS

1. Gender of participant

Male	Female	Prefer not to say

2. Age group of participant

Below 25 years	26-35 years	36-45 years	46 years and above

3. Ward of residence in Bindura

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4. How long have you lived in Bindura?

Less than l year	l-5 years	6-l0 years	More than l0 years

SECTION B: MECHANISMS FOR COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

5. Are you aware of any platforms or opportunities provided by Bindura Urban Council for community members to participate in local governance decisions? If yes, please describe them.

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6. Have you ever attended a ward meeting organised by Bindura Urban Council? If yes, please describe your experience. If no, why not?

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7. Have you ever been invited to or participated in a budget consultation with Bindura Urban Council? Describe what the experience was like.

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SECTION B: MECHANISMS FOR COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

8. Do you feel that your views and concerns are genuinely heard and considered by Bindura Urban Council when you participate in any community engagement activities?

Please explain.

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SECTION C: CHALLENGES HINDERING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

SA=Strongly Agree A=Agree N/S=Not Sure DA=Disagree SDA=Strongly Disagree

	SA	A	N/S	DA	SDA
9. Political party influence makes it difficult for ordinary residents to freely participate in ward meetings.					
10. I am not aware of my rights to participate in local governance decisions as guaranteed by Zimbabwe's Constitution.					

11. The economic challenges I face make it difficult for me to attend ward meetings and council consultations.					

l2. Women in my community face specific barriers that prevent them from participating in local					
governance processes.					
l3. Ward meetings in Bindura are held too infrequently to allow meaningful community input into council decisions.					
l4. I feel intimidated or unsafe when expressing my views at ward meetings or council consultations.					

15. From your experience as a community member, what do you consider to be the biggest challenge to meaningful community participation in Bindura Urban Council?

Please discuss.

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SECTION D: OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

16. What changes would you like to see in the way Bindura Urban Council engages with community members?

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17. Do you think using mobile phones or social media platforms like WhatsApp could improve communication between residents and Bindura Urban Council? How?

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18. What role do you think Residents Associations and civil society organisations should play in improving community participation in Bindura Urban Council?

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SECTION D: OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCING COMMUNITY

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19. If you were given the opportunity to address the leadership of Bindura Urban Council about community participation, what would you tell them?

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Thank you very much for your time and valuable contributions to this study.

APPENDIX C:

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

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FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT OF PEACE AND GOVERNANCE

INSTRUMENT 3: DOCUMENTARY ANALYSIS CHECKLIST

Purpose:

This checklist is used to systematically review and extract relevant information from council documents and national policy documents in order to supplement primary data collected through interviews and focus group discussions. The checklist covers

documents relevant to community participation in local governance in Bindura Urban Council.

Researcher:

.....

Date of Review:

.....

Document Source:

SECTION A: NATIONAL POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

DOCUMENTS

Document/Information Sought	Available	Not Available	Remarks
Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No.20) Act 2013 - Section 264 on Devolution			
Urban Councils Act Chapter 29:15 - Provisions on ward meetings and community consultation			
Refugees Act Chapter 4:03 (where applicable to displacement governance)			
National Development Strategy 1 (2021-2025) - Local governance provisions			
Ministry of Local Government Circulars on community participation			

Zimbabwe Local Government Association Policy Documents			

SECTION B: BINDURA URBAN COUNCIL INSTITUTIONAL DOCUMENTS

Document/Information Sought -	Available	Not Available	Remarks
Minutes of Full Council Meetings (2020-2024)			
Minutes of Ward Meetings across sampled wards (2020-2024)			
Annual Reports of Bindura Urban Council (2020-2024)			
Budget Documents and Budget Consultation Records (2020-2024)			
Community Development Committee Records and Minutes			
Council Strategic Plan or Development Plan			
Service Delivery Reports and Community Feedback Records			

Council Communication and Public Notice Records			

Audit Reports and Financial Statements			

SECTION C: CIVIL SOCIETY AND EXTERNAL REPORTS

Document/Information Sought	Available	Not Available	Remarks
Reports by Residents Associations on council-community engagement			
Reports by NGOs on local governance and community participation in Bindura			
UNDP or UN Habitat Reports on local governance in Zimbabwe			
Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission Reports on governance			
Media Reports on Bindura Urban Council community engagement activities			

SECTION D: KEY INFORMATION EXTRACTED FROM DOCUMENTS

For each document reviewed, record the following key information:

Document Title and Date	Key Information on Participation Mechanisms	Key Information on Challenges	Key Information on Opportunities

SECTION E: GENERAL OBSERVATIONS AND NOTES

1. What is the overall quality and completeness of the documents reviewed?

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2. Are there any notable gaps or inconsistencies in the documentary record on community participation in Bindura Urban Council?

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3. What key themes emerge from the documentary evidence regarding community participation in Bindura Urban Council?

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4. How does the documentary evidence corroborate or contradict the data collected through interviews and focus group discussions?

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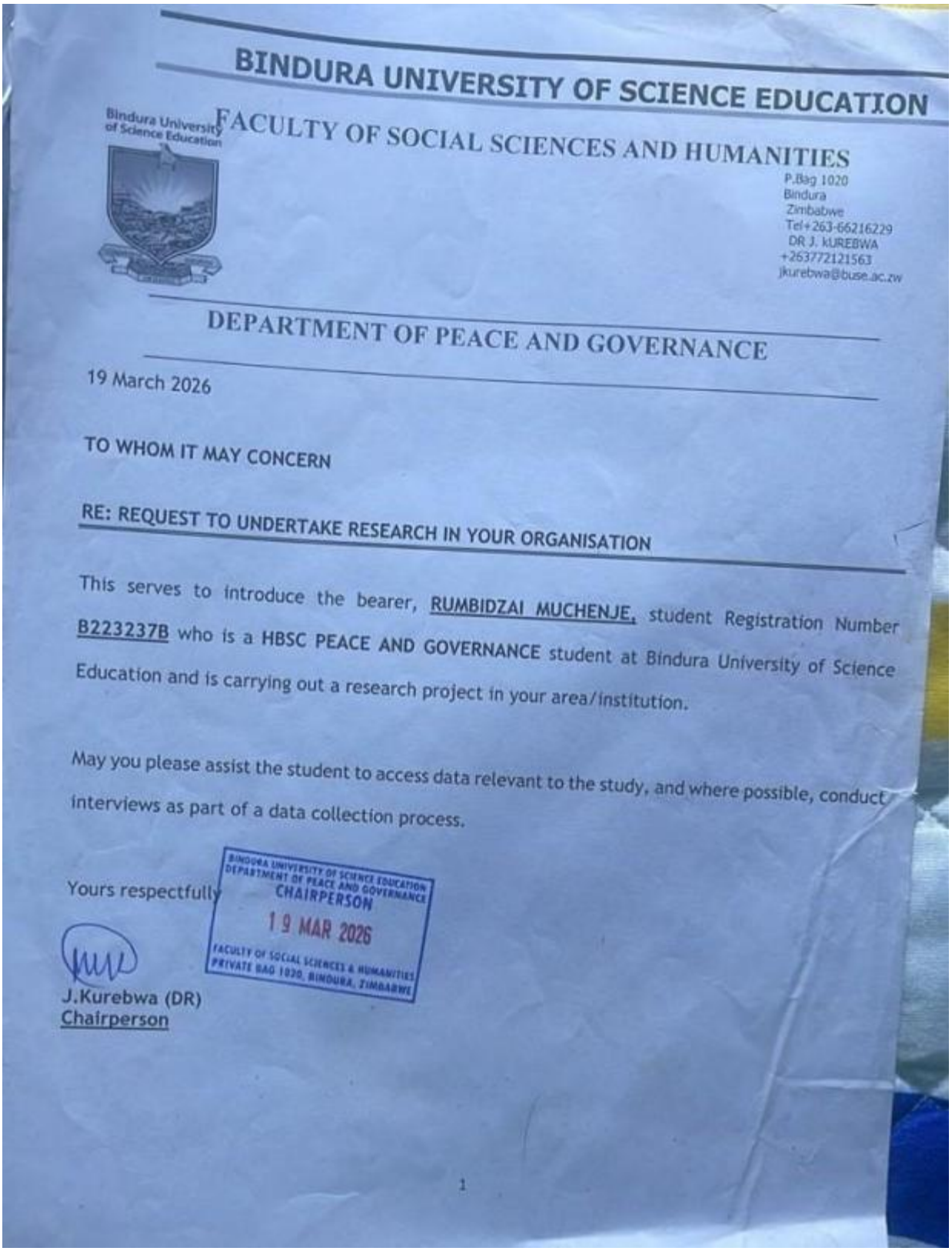
Researcher's Signature: ……

Date: .....

Supervisor's Signature: ……

Date: .....

APPENDIX D: University Letter



BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

Bindura University of Science Education

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

P.Bag 1020
Bindura
Zimbabwe
Tel+263-66216229
DR J. kUREBWA
+263772121563
jkurebwa@buse.ac.zw

DEPARTMENT OF PEACE AND GOVERNANCE

19 March 2026

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: REQUEST TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH IN YOUR ORGANISATION

This serves to introduce the bearer, RUMBIDZAI MUCHENJE, student Registration Number B223237B who is a HBSC PEACE AND GOVERNANCE student at Bindura University of Science Education and is carrying out a research project in your area/institution.

May you please assist the student to access data relevant to the study, and where possible, conduct interviews as part of a data collection process.

Yours respectfully

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF PEACE AND GOVERNANCE
CHAIRPERSON
19 MAR 2026
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES
PRIVATE BAG 1020, BINDURA, ZIMBABWE

J.Kurebwa (DR)
Chairperson

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