



The Agents of Regime: An Insight from Grassroots Elected Leaders in Grassroots Governance in Tanzania

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Abstract

This study explored the contextual setback of the grassroots elected leaders in grassroots governance in Tanzania. Specifically, it examines the legal framework and functional relations between grassroots elected leaders and their stakeholders in grassroots governance. The study employed the Principal agent model¹ and its methodology was primarily qualitative. Its findings relied heavily on observations documentary review and in-depth interviews with key informants concerned. Generally, it was found that the contextual setback of the grassroots elected leaders in grassroots governance in Tanzania emanated from various factors. Some of these factors include the weaknesses of the local government Act of 1982 and its enabling legislations, insufficient capacity and motivation, and weakness in functional relations between the grassroots elected leaders and their stakeholders. The study concludes that, first, under inappropriate law, insufficient motivation and inappropriate functional relations be-

¹A principal-agent model refers to the relationship between an asset owner or principal and the agent or person contracted to manage that asset on the owner's behalf. The principal-agent problem was first addressed in the 1970s by economic and institutional theorists (Jensen and Meckling, 1976). According to Tilton *et al.* (2023) the main element in the principal-agent model is trust that is you trust both principal and the agent. The argument surrounding the principal-agent is the separation of control that occurs when the principal hires an agent to act on their behalf without mentioning the costs incurred by the principal in dealing with the agent that is agent costs (Krawiec, 2004). Agency costs come from setting up moral or monetary incentives to encourage an agent to act in a certain way as the agent agrees to work for the principal in return for an incentive, but the agreement may not have fulfilled may encourage the agent to pursue their own agenda and ignore what's best for the principal.

The model link with this study as grassroots elected leaders in this case village/hamlet chairpersons being an agent and the local and central government the principal. Under this relationship what is expected is that the central/local government as principal offers various orders, directives and even by-laws to be implemented at the grassroots levels, the grassroots elected leaders as the agents supposed to supervise the execution of orders from central/local government with expectations of having benefits from the principal either financial or non-financial benefits.

tween the grassroots elected leaders and their stakeholders in grassroots governance, grassroots governance is difficult if not impossible to comprehend; at best, it is likely to remain an elusive phenomenon. Second, in a context where unethical behaviour of grassroots elected leaders is rarely controlled, some leaders have an opportunity to act according to their wishes and not according to the law, hence jeopardizing grassroots governance. The study recommends substantial amendments to the Tanzania local government Act of 1982 and its enabling legislation. Tanzania grassroots election laws should be amended to allow independent candidates for grassroots local elections in order to minimize political party interference with grassroots elected leaders.

Subject Areas

Corporate Governance, Human Resource Management

Keywords

Grassroots Governance, Grassroots Elected Leaders, Leadership

1. Background of the Study

Studies on the contextual setback of grassroots elected leaders in grassroots governance in developing countries such as Tanzania have been extensively debated and reformed in line with regime change. However, many challenges and issues are still impeding them. The grassroots elected leaders in grassroots governance have been described as lacking political will and a proper legal framework [1]-[3]. This historical weakness arose for a variety of reasons including weak institutional capacity, the roles of the executive branch of government and the existence of traditional values and customs which conflict with the requirements of modern leadership style [4]-[6]. The results of these and other factors weakened the grassroots elected leaders in grassroots governance.

Historically, the concept of leadership originated from the evolution of human society that is from the state of nature to the social contract. Through the state of nature, there were hardships and oppressions in this section of society because human beings lived without an overseeing authority [7]. To overcome these hardships they entered into two agreements one being “Pactum Unionis”² and “Pactum subjectionis”³ to the mightiest authority in order to secure self-protection and self-preservation, and to avoid misery and pain [8]. As the development of state institutions became necessary evils, leadership brought troubles to human lives. The consensus among scholars is that the sophisticated grassroots leadership of the modern state in Africa originated from the introduction of European colonial regime [9]. Under colonial administration a new value system was imposed which

²Pactum Unionis is the Latin word which means the unions of people who sought protection of their lives and property.

³Pactum Subjection is imply the people united together and pledged to obey an authority and surrender the whole or part of their freedom and rights to an authority.

involved violent destruction of indigenous administrative and political leadership as well as establishing the base for contemporary leadership's structure and composition in Africa.

1.1. Grassroots Leaders in Grassroots Governance in Tanzania

In Tanzania, the concern to have grassroots leaders for grassroots governance has its roots in the colonial administration. For example, when the Germans arrived in Tanzania they found societies being administered in diverse structures of governance: some were highly centralized structures that tied the individual peasant families and villages with a central state authority, others exercised independent family decisions. The Germans rearranged and coordinated the pre-colonial structure in accordance with their interest. For example, in the coastal areas and at the grassroots level the Germans put in place the so-called "akidas". Below them were "jumbes". According to [1], the offices of the *Akida* and *Jumbe* were found in the coastal regions where the sultan of Zanzibar had employed them in his administrative structures. These *Jumbes* were essentially village headmen who were hereditary and unpaid, who received compensation from tribute and services rendered by their constituencies [4]. The *akidas* on the other hand, supervised the territory of several *jumbes*; they were paid officials and did not necessarily belong to the ethnic group they administered [1]. The influence of this reform to the grassroots governance was that, the country experienced a uniform and imposed system of administration but did not respect local institutions of governance as well as their democratic and diverse character, it established a new class of hereditary rulers at the local level in the name of "jumbes" in areas where hereditary rule has been non-existent.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

After independence, the government of Tanzania realized the significance of grassroots elected leaders through implementing various reforms with a view to promoting effective grassroots leadership as a way of strengthening democracy and good governance. For example, through the ministry of the President Office's Regional administration and local government, the government has taken a number of measures in an attempt to improve the position of grassroots elected leaders in grassroots governance. Among such measures includes, enactment of local elections Cap 292, the reintroduction of competitive grassroots elections in grassroots governance [10], revising Tanzania local government Act of 1982, introducing a pay structure for grassroots elected leaders and employing village and hamlet executive officers to assist grassroots elected leaders in grassroots governance. In all such initiatives the authority's attempt to motivate and simplify their work, perhaps due to the realization that they play significant roles in state building.

However, with all such measures, grassroots elected leaders in grassroots governance still occupy an insignificant space in grassroots good governance. This situation raises a number of questions, for example, to what extent does the Legal

framework that guides grassroots elected leaders in grassroots governance hinder or support their effectiveness? How do functional relations between grassroots elected leaders and the government in grassroots governance affect grassroots governance? Using the cases of two selected councils the study explores these questions in an attempt to gain a better understanding of existing setbacks of grassroots elected leaders in grassroots governance.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to explore the contextual setbacks of grassroots elected leaders in grassroots governance in Tanzania.

Specific Objectives

- 1) To explore the extent to which Tanzania Local Government Act hinders or influences grassroots elected leaders in grassroots governance.
- 2) To assess whether functional relations between grassroots elected leaders and local and central government hinder or support grassroots governance in Tanzania?
- 3) To highlight the best ways to employ in order to promote the significance of grassroots elected leaders in grassroots governance.

A key research question was formulated for each important issue. The paper addresses the following key questions.

- 1) To what extent does the legal framework for grassroots elected leaders influence or hinder their involvement in grassroots governance?
- 2) How do functional relations between grassroots elected leaders and local and central government influence grassroots governance in Tanzania?
- 3) What are the best ways to employ in order to promote the significance of grassroots elected leaders in grassroots governance?

2. Literature Review

This chapter presents a literature review based on the theory and practices of grassroots elected leaders in grassroots governance. It includes a definition of key terms, theoretical and empirical literature and research gaps.

2.1. Conceptual Overview of Grassroots Elected Leaders in Grassroots Governance

Grassroots governance in general encourages and empowers local communities to participate and promote solutions that are focused on the local needs as they espouse particular characteristics such as accountability, answerability, honesty, objectivity, integrity and transparency. Similarly, [11] contends that grassroots governance can articulate to bring the decision making authorities nearer to the people. Additionally, local government Act of 1982 stipulates that “the grassroots governance is democratic processes of transferring power from central to the peripheries. Therefore, in this research paper, grassroots governance means a democratic process such as accountability, answerability, transparency, inclusiveness,

respect of human rights, diligence, integrity and objectivity which will enable grassroots citizens to get quality services. On the other hand, public grassroots elected leaders are construed to mean village and Mtaa chairpersons who are elected every five years and work in local government offices at the village and Mtaa levels.

2.2. Theoretical Overview

There are various theories which explain grassroots governance, such as new public management (NPM) [12] [13], deliberative democracy [14] and agency theory [15]. The agency theory explores relationships where one party (the principal) delegates decision-making authority to another (the agent), focusing on potential conflicts of interest and mechanisms to align their goals. Agency theory is characterized by Principal-Agent, where one party (the principal) relies on another (the agent) to act on their behalf, and delegation of authority, where the principal delegates decision-making authority to the agent, who is then responsible for acting in the principal's best interests. Agency theory aims to understand and address agency problems that arise between Principal and Agency focusing on designing contracts and mechanisms to align the agent's interests with the principal's and minimize potential conflicts. Thus, for the purpose of this study agency theory examined the existing relationships between grassroots elected leaders and local/central governments in grassroots governance and how these relationships affect grassroots governance in the selected councils.

2.3. Empirical Studies

Empirical evidence on the contextual setback of grassroots elected leaders in effective grassroots governance provides competing views as one view argues for the limited involvement of these leaders in grassroots governance. The proponents of these schools of thought are based on the assumption that governance is an activity performed by central government institutions particularly the executive branch of government [16].

The literature on top down approach (centralization) tends to believe that centralization is the key instrument for effective governance as all plans and programmes originate from the top and the supervision of these plans and programmes is also done by the central government agents particularly the office of District/Municipal Director [17]. The structure of the government of Tanzania is organized in a decentralized form where by the local leaders in this case the village/hamlet chairperson form a significant part of the governance structure of the government. The pioneers of this argument relied on the facts that the implementation of government programmes takes place at the grassroots areas, whereby local leaders are the main agents of local/central government execution of these projects as a results they form a significant part of grassroots governance.

In performing governance functions, most grassroots elected leaders face many challenges such as a lack of education and proper skills for the administration of

various projects initiated by the central government, weak resources allocated to the offices of grassroots elected leaders as well as an insufficient legal framework that guides their operations [18]. The insight from contemporary local governance practices in Tanzania revealed that the roles of village and Hamlet elected leaders in local governance are underscored by the facts that resources are attracted to the central government. That is the top down approach where by the central government becomes the principal and the local government in this sense the village and Hamlet leaders become an agent of the central government. Under this scenario, first the principal own resources and the second he/she is supposed to support the agent for effective local governance but existing literature such as [19]-[22] revealed that the principal does not provides enough support to the agents hence grassroots elected leader seems to be weak in supervising the implementing grassroots projects.

Commonwealth local government forum (CLGF) argued for the establishment of internationally recognized principles shaping the conception of local self-government, such as the European Charter of Local Government (ECLG) and the International Guidelines on decentralization and the strengthening of local Authorities, these principles tries to address some important issues as far as grassroots governance is concerned, among of the issue is the recognition of grassroots elected leaders (Village and Hamlet Chairperson) as a foundation blocks for local governance below the district level. However, some scholar such as [23] provides that there is no global standards or charter on local self-governance as a results some countries comply with these standards while others do not.

The 1982 Act provides for the basic structure of the village in which two major organs- the village assembly made up of all adults residing in a village and the village council made up of members elected by the village assembly were identified. According to some analysts such as [24], the village assembly is the least powerful body which does not have the power to make by-laws which are made the prerogative of the minister responsible. The minister is not required to consult the village council or the village assembly, but only relevant district councils; this largely affects the involvement of grassroots elected leaders in the governance process as their views and opinions seem less important to the central government.

The comprehensive study conducted by [25] focuses on the relationship between grassroots leaders' elections and the increased share of public expenditures. In this study he found that grassroots leaders' elections increase public expenditure by 4.21% points at the same time reduce the share of administrative costs by 3.96% points. Also he found that grassroots leaders' elections reduce the share of income handed to the township by 4.44% points. According to him these results show that elected grassroots leaders have significantly strengthened the accountability of the village government, but something to note here is that elected officials can have strengthened the accountability of the village government if at all they receive support from the central government something that seems to be ineffective in developing countries like Tanzania.

2.4. Research Gap

The reviewed literature revealed that there have been generally many studies on grassroots governance in particular and central government in general but most of these have their focused on local elections [26] accountability and transparency at grassroots level [1], local live hood [27] and government security at grassroots level [28]. None of the above attempts have exclusively dealt-with the contextual setback of grassroots elected leaders (village/hamlet chairpersons) in grassroots governance.

Also the existing empirical literature for example, [29]-[31] provides general roles of grassroots leaders at a particular locality but none of the above has focused on the contextual setback of a specific category of grassroots elected leaders (village and Mtaa chairpersons) in grassroots governance. The literature especially in Africa and Tanzania in particular for example [32]-[35] revealed that grassroots leaders are used as an instrument for political success by politicians (councilors, Member of Parliament and president) rather than an instrument for effective grassroots governance.

Thus study intends to explore the contextual setback of grassroots elected leaders in grassroots governance. The assumption here is that the more the close to local community, the more the chance to communicate with central government in matters related to grassroots governance, but the situation seems to be the opposite, and in spite of being important instrument in grassroots governance, being legitimizing by local people, being recognized by the Act of Parliament, the capacity of village and Mtaa chairpersons in grassroots governance seems to be in vain. Therefore, the study assumes that inappropriate laws, improper functional relations between grassroots leaders and the government and a lack of political will incapacitate their roles in effective grassroots governance.

3. Methodology

This section presents methods and procedures that were used in gathering information relevant to the study. It is this part that explains and covers research design, target population, sample size and sampling procedure, data collection methods and the reasons as to why they are used according to research objectives and study questions. Furthermore, this section involves data gathering instruments, validation of instruments and data processing and analysis procedures.

3.1. Study Area

The study was conducted at Ubungo Municipality in Dar es Salaam and Kibaha district council in Coast region. The choice of Ubungo and Kibaha district council in Coast region as a case was prompted by the fact that Ubungo is urban area so that information concerning the hamlet elected leaders which is found in Urban local government was collected while Kibaha council represent peri-urban and rural area so that the information concerning village elected leaders which is found in rural local government will be collected. Therefore, the selection of these

two councils as a case study provides a relevant case of the contextual setback of grassroots elected leaders in grassroots governance. Four wards were selected purposively because of being representative of the population. These wards are Kibamba and Manzese at Ubungo Municipality and Mlandizi and Miembesaba in Kibaha district council region. The initial projected targeted sample consisted of 70 respondents. However, the actual data producing sample had a total of 60 which is equal to 85% of the total respondents.

3.2. Data Collection Methods

In this study where the main interest is to examine contextual setback of grassroots elected leaders in grassroots governance in-depth interviews were well suited, these methods will be further complemented by documentary review and observations. The use of multiple methods was done intentionally because no single method is adequate in itself in collecting valid and reliable data on a particular problem. In this paper also semi structured interview was used. The advantage of using this method is that it conforms to the qualitative approach and facilitates the required level of interaction between the researcher and respondents. Secondary sources provide interpretation and analysis of primary sources. This paper used the necessary books, journals, relevant official reports, statistics, and records of relevant information concerning grassroots elected leaders in grassroots governance.

Data collected from the field were analyzed using the thematic analysis technique. This is the method used to analyze data from both qualitative research. The outcomes will be of understanding the problems under investigation deeply. Therefore, findings of the paper were subjected to both qualitative and statistical analysis with the application of Statistical Package for Social Sciences.

4. Discussion of Research Findings

4.1. The Legal Framework as a Source of Constraints for Grassroots Leaders in Grassroots Governance

In order to survive and perform effectively and efficiently every individual, organization and authority requires a set of legal frameworks to guide their operations. The legal framework is a critical factor for organization performance. Grassroots elected leaders as individuals and as an institute require appropriate law in order to perform their duties effectively. The existing literatures reveal that the power and authority of grassroots elected leaders in grassroots governance are regulated by Local Government Act of 1982. This act provides the basis for the existence of village, Mtaa and Hamlet leaders for grassroots governance.

The findings of this study reveal that one of the contextual setbacks of grassroots elected leaders in grassroots governance is the law that guarantees their existence and survival. The local government Act of 1982 has been blamed by many respondents as a critical constraint facing grassroots leaders in grassroots governance. For example, out of 60 respondents who were interviewed concerning the

existing laws promote professional grassroots elected leaders or not, 53 (88.3 percent) argued that the law did not provide the avenue for having professional grassroots elected leaders. For example, Section 55 - 62 of the local government Act of 1982, provides the composition of the village government organs including the position of Chairpersons but the Act does not provide a particular function to be performed by the said organs [36]. This to large extent affects the operations of grassroots elected leaders because they become government officials without a portfolio.

Another critical point in the law is the qualifications for someone to be elected as grassroots leader in a particular village, Mtaa or Hamlet. Section (39 - 40) local government election Act chapter 292, provides chance for any Tanzania to contest for a village, Mtaa or Hamlet chairperson who has a minimum qualifications of standard seven education, general provisions like be Tanzanian, mentally fit, attained the apparent age of twenty-one years, be a member of a household within the village and is ordinary resident in the village [37]. For examples section 39 (2e) added that: “*A person shall be qualified for election if he can read and write in Kiswahili or English*”.

The low educational levels among elected grassroots leaders limit their ability to be effective in decision making process as it tends to impede their understanding of their functions properly. The study revealed that about 30 percent of selected hamlet/village chairpersons in the study have never had any post-standard seven education or any other formal education or literacy training. This affects the extent to which they can be engaged in local level decision making. The low literacy levels also affect communication among the grassroots actors in terms of development programmes. According to the literature, primary education provides a person with minor basics [38]. Mostly primary education in Tanzania prepares a person for just elementary knowledge of how to read and write. As it was provided by [39], elementary education is no longer enough to prepare an individual to take full advantage of existing opportunities. [40] work on the relationship between education level of a leader and their ability to plan, mobilize people and monitor the implementation of development project, it was found that there was a good relationship between the education level and the ability of a leader to plan, mobilize people and monitor the implementation of development projects as the leaders with secondary education were found to be more familiar with development activities.

In connection with the level of education stipulated by the law, another critical factor that incapacitates elected grassroots leaders in grassroots governance in Tanzania is the power provided by the law. The existing law did not provide enough decision making powers to grassroots elected leaders particularly to Village, Mtaa and Hamlet chairpersons. This is also a constraint for them to take into consideration that the more the decision making powers the more the critical decisions that affect the lives of the local community are likely to be made. In their responses, as far as the powers of grassroots leaders are concerned, the local gov-

ernment Act of 1982 was mentioned by almost 57 (95 percent) of the respondents as one among the key factors considered to be the reasons for incapacitating grassroots leaders in grassroots governance. The existing facts reveal that empowering grassroots leaders with decision-making authority is crucial for fostering inclusive and effective governance as it allows communities to address their own needs, promotes local ownership, and enhances the sustainability of development programs. Decisions made with local knowledge and participation are more likely to be relevant, effective, and equitable. [41] added that grassroots leaders have a deep understanding of their local context, allowing them to identify and address specific community needs more effectively than top-down approaches.

4.2. The Key Responsibilities of Village, Mtaa and Hamlet Chairpersons

Principally responsibilities in leadership determine the powers and legitimate to rule the community. In other words the viability of leaders in the community depends on what responsibilities are assigned to him/her by the law or any other means. Grassroots elected leaders as a group of people having the duties to rule the local communities depend on the responsibilities assigned to exercise powers and are legitimate to the local communities. The facts revealed that the local governments Act of 1982 does not provide clear responsibilities to these leaders hence their legitimate and powers become illusive to local communities. For example, the interview with one of the hamlet elected leader from Ubungo Municipal had this to say: *‘It is difficult to separate our responsibilities and the responsibilities of Mtaa executive officer although in principle they are our subordinates’*. He added that: *‘the difference between us and them as far as responsibilities is concerned is that, Mtaa chairpersons mobilize the local community in development projects while Mtaa executive officers supervise the project’*. Again the 58 (96 percent) of the respondents were of the opinion that Local Government Act of 1982 does not provide clear and measurable responsibilities to the village and Mtaa chairpersons. For instance, in articulating the reasons for lack of clear responsibilities for these grassroots elected leaders’ respondents generally expressed the concerns that the local government Acts provides general responsibilities which are also being performed by other leaders such as councilors, ward executive officer (WEO) and even the Mtaa and village executive officer (MEO and VEO). To evidence this, one of the respondents had this to say: *“The law provides general responsibilities to village and Mtaa chairpersons which are also the responsibilities of other leaders such as village and Mtaa executive officers within the same locality.”*

According to the respondents, the absence of clear responsibilities between elected and appointed grassroots leaders at the grassroots levels creates a dilemma of responsibilities as results in the conflict of who is accountable to what tends to happen.

One of the interesting case was observed when local resident comes to the office of Mtaa executive officer to get identification letter as he was required by the bank

before opening account, unfortunately the Mtaa executive officer and Mtaa chairperson both of them want to attend the client, this situation justifies that the clear responsibilities between elected and appointed leaders at the grassroots governance are not effective. In connection with that the observation revealed that the working days of the village and Mtaa chairpersons were scheduled three or two times in a week depending on council regulations. For example in Ubungo municipal council, the chairpersons of Mtaa are supposed to be in the office two times a week, Monday and Thursday while in Kibaha town council and Kibaha districts councils the village chairpersons have to come to their offices three times a week that are Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

The study wanted to know the reasons for these specific days in the two councils. The observation revealed that these leaders were given a specific day to be in the office because most of their responsibilities are performed by Mtaa and village executive officers. The implication of this observation is that, the local government Act of 1982 did not provide clear responsibilities to these leaders as results the duplication of function between them and their executive officers dominating their relationship.

4.3. Accountability of Grassroots Elected Leaders

The study intended to know the accountability of elected grassroots leaders in grassroots governance. The case of accountability in Tanzania particularly in grassroots governance like elsewhere emphasizes three components namely: answerability, obligation and sanctions in case of unsatisfactory performance [42], this study rely on hierarchy and monitoring as the basis for analyzing the multiple accountability of grassroots elected leaders and how do they affect their capacity to govern local community. The respondents were on the opinions that the presence of multiple institutions which hold grassroots elected leaders accountable creates a dilemma of accountability as a results they fail to perform their tasks properly. The observations revealed that the elected grassroots leaders are accountable first, to their political party, second to the district executive directors and third to the minister responsible for local government. These three institutions tend to affect their confidence in working as each one in some cases provides different orders and directives to be fulfilled. For example, from the political party grassroots elected leaders receive political orders and directives (party manifesto) to be fulfilled, from the Minister responsible and the district Director they receive administration orders and directives (execution) to supervise grassroots governance. In a proper way political and administrative orders tend to work properly when they are issued by a single authority (hierarchy) and backed by proper resource allocation [43], but if issued by different hierarchies and no resource to execute them, it is difficult to comprehend and remains an elusive phenomenon.

One of the principle of liberal democracy is that the elected officials are accountable to the electorate and not to anyone else; this has been practiced in Tanzania for many years since the reintroduction of multiparty democracy in 1992.

For example, the Councilors, Members of Parliament and even the president are direct accountable to the electorate, but the observations revealed that the elected officials at the grassroots do not enjoy this privilege as their survive in the office is subject to more than electorates, in some cases they have been threaten to be ousted from offices by district Commissioners and even the minister responsible [44]. Actually an employee who receives orders from multiple bosses has conflicting directions and muddles about priorities as well as their ability to perform their duties effectively. This to a large extent affects most of the grassroots elected leaders in grassroots governance. One respondent had this to say: “*Multiple accountability creates confusion and stress for us and our office as we try to balance the demands of different stakeholders’ which makes us unable to make decisions on matters affecting our local communities.*”

In fact the pressure of meeting multiple accountability demands can affect decision-making processes, as individuals and organizations may hesitate to take action for fear of negative consequences from one or more authorities.

In connection with multiple accountability, the study was interested in knowing the instruments used to check the accountability of these leaders. Checking or assessing the accountability of something is very important in good governance as it ensures the person or institutions provide what he/she supposed to do as far as the legal framework is concerned [45]. Grassroots leaders like individuals or institutions, need to be checked in order to monitor their accountability to the grassroots communities with the intention of improving service provisions. Opinions from different respondents revealed that there are different institutions responsible for checking accountability of these grassroots leaders, the findings revealed that 35 (58.3 percent) argued for political parties, 15 (25 percent) argued for council officials, 8 (13.3 percent) argued for village or Mtaa councils while 2 (3.3 percent) argued for others. The study further interested to know willingness of these institutions to make follow up on the accountability of these leaders, the findings revealed that the willingness of these institutions to make follow up on the accountability of these leaders is very narrow, 15 percent for political parties, 20 percent for council officials and 3 percent for others, the reasons behind this, 27 (45 percent) argued they are less important as far as service delivery to local communities is concerned, 32 (53.3 percent) argued no fund allocated to their offices while 3(5 percent) argued for others. In fact, the observations revealed that no attentions have been devoted by government and even the political parties to follow up the deed and misdeed of grassroots elected leaders as one of the respondent had this to say: “*No much attention is given on the accountability of grassroots elected leaders by their political parties and even by councils’ officials that why they can be out of office for the whole week without any sanction to them*”. From this citation it is obvious that the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms for grassroots elected leaders is very weak as results decreased citizen engagement, reduced responsiveness from government officials, and potential for corruption hence greater risk of mismanagement and wasted resources become the whistle of the day.

4.4. Motivation

Principally motivation is one among of the factors that determine accountability and answerability of any servant. Motivation is the reason for people's actions, willingness and goals; it is a need that requires satisfaction. These needs could be wants or desires that are acquired through the influence of culture, society, lifestyle, etc. or generally innate [46], added that motivation is one's direction to behaviour or what causes a person to want to repeat behavior.

The experience revealed that an individual's motivation may be inspired by others or events (extrinsic motivation) or it may come from within the individual (intrinsic motivation). Motivation has been considered as one of the most important reasons that inspire a person to move forward in life, and it results from the interaction of both conscious and unconscious factors. Grassroots elected leaders as human being need motivation in order to perform their responsibilities properly. The study is interested in knowing to what extent these leaders are motivated by the government in performing their duties. Opinions from respondents suggest that the motivation provided to these grassroots leaders tends to differ from one council to another, from one form of motivation to another. For example, the interviewee from Kibaha town council had this to say: '*Motivation to grassroots elected leaders at Kibaha town council is provided especially financial motivation*'. He added that '*in every month they are given Tsh 50,000/ = to motivate them to work taking into consideration they are not legally entitled to salaries*'.

The study was interested in knowing to what extent the existing motivation motivates grassroots elected leaders in grassroots governance. The majority of respondents 56 (93.3 percent) argued in disfavor of the amount provided as very little compared to the responsibilities performed in their areas of jurisdiction.

The analysis of local government Act of 1982 supports the above experience as nowhere in the Act and even in Tanzania public service legislations explicitly provides the existence of any motivation to grassroots elected leaders. This to large extent is insubordination of these leaders due to the fact that their responsibilities require government support like any public servants as they are involved in the supervision of many projects in their locality at the same time their subordinates Mtaa and Village executive officers are paid salary by government. To justify this some Village and Mtaa chairpersons in Busega district council strikes demanding the government pay them money as compensation for their accountabilities and responsibilities to the community [47].

Impartial motivation is a serious constraint facing grassroots elected leaders in grassroots governance in Africa and Tanzania in particular, being representative of government at the grassroots levels in areas like mobilization of local community to support government projects, preaching to obey the state law and orders, supervising education infrastructure land planning and land use etc. One needs a strong motivation, in the absence of such resulting in misuse of local resources, corruption and maladministration of local communities' properties. One of the

respondents had this to say: “*The Mtaa chairpersons sometimes involved in misuse of local public resources because they do not have the places to augment their financial capacity hence decided to serve themselves in the areas of local community projects*”. This citation reveals two important observations as far as the grassroots elected leaders’ contextual setback in grassroots governance is concern, due to insufficient financial motivation most of working time of these leaders are used to find the ways of augmenting their financial constraints and second, they engage in corruption practice as a survive strategy hence facilitate maladministration in grassroots levels. For example, Ethnographic studies have long provided examples of corruption by village leaders that was met with impunity [48] observed that, village residents in Tanzania complained that food aid was not handed out to the intended beneficiaries, that subsidy vouchers were misallocated, that village leaders used and sold communal land as if it were their private property, that contributions were collected for projects that were never realized, that funds disappeared from village coffers, and so forth.

In interview with respondents from Kibaha district council whether “most people in the village think that the village elected leaders are being corrupt”, 50(83.3 percent) of residents affirm this statement. The lack of financial support has cited by many interviewee 55 (91.6 percent) as has led to an increasing number of allegations of corruption among local leaders. This finding corresponds with the findings of [49] where he found that: “*In some rural areas, there have been widespread accusations of village leaders demanding small bribes for services like affixing of official stamps on National Identification Cards (NIDA) or for loan application forms.*”

The study intended to make a thorough analysis of this complicated financial motivation provided to these grassroots leaders. Generally the Acts, the local government district council and the local government urban council Acts do not guarantee the financial motivation to chairpersons of Village and Mtaa government although some council provided little to motivate them to work. The study intended to know the impact of unregulated financial motivation on the performance of these grassroots elected leaders.

Opinions from the respondents suggest that, in most cases, the village and Mtaa chairpersons are unable to perform their work properly in the absence of financial support from the government. One of interesting case was found at Ubungu Municipality whereby the chairpersons of three Mtaa were not found in their offices three times when the researcher wanted to interview them but the researcher succeeds to interview them through mobile phone, one of them has this to say: ‘*it is difficult for me to be in the office three times as indicated in my timetable because in some cases I have to look for my family survive*’. To work for family support is not something new to many public civil servants as their salary do not fulfill the family needs within a month, if that being the case what happens to those who do not have any salary from the government while they are working within the same government, the is ridicules to their positions.

The secondary data reviewed also proves that inappropriate financial motivation given to grassroots elected leaders causes discontent among grassroots elected leaders as in September 2024 in Maswa District, Simiyu Region demanded the government pay a debt of Sh 152,533,050 in unpaid allowances and stipends. During a council meeting, Hamlet chairpersons expressed their frustrations, highlighting their continued service despite the government's neglect. For example, George Gogadi, chairperson of Majebele Hamlet, called for an audit into potential embezzlement, while Madaraka Saira of Kiwanja cha Ndege criticized officials for misusing their allowances for personal gain [50].

4.5. The Ethical Conduct of Grassroots Elected Leaders

Ethics for public leaders in contemporary leadership has become the central concern for judging the quality of leader; in most cases ethics are used as criteria for appointing or selecting the leaders. It is one of the strategic tools for attaining government objectives of promoting transparency, accountability and private sector development; enhancing and managing scarce resources [51] and [52]. The observation revealed that there is no specific law which enacted to regulate the ethical conducts of these leaders, regardless of the existing of public leadership code of ethics Act No 13 of 1995. That is to say they were not accountable to the leadership code of ethics an important instrument to sanctioning elected and appointed public leaders. For example, section 4 (1) of the Public leadership code of ethics No 13 of 1995 as revised in 2020 mention the public leaders accountable to this Act, unfortunately the grassroots elected leaders were not mentioned. This is another area of weakness as far as grassroots elected leaders in grassroots governance is concerned due to the fact that they are free from declarations of assets and liability as per section 9 (1) (a-b) and other sanctions as per section 8 (a-g) of the leadership code of ethics Act 13 of 1995 as revised in 2020. Being free from sanctions of leadership code of ethics act as avenue to involve in misuse of public offices for personal interest.

The observation further revealed that the ethical conducts of these leaders are regulated by institution like the Tanzania Prevention and Combating Corruption Bureau (PCCB), their respective political parties and even The Tanzania Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance (CHRAGG). The question to ask here is that why these leaders are treated different with other elected leaders while their responsibilities seem to be the same? To answer this question is very difficult perhaps they are junior leaders compared to other or their responsibilities have less impact on state governance. Actually there is a need to incorporate these leaders in the leadership code of ethics as their responsibilities is quite similar with others who are accountable to the leadership code of ethics Act No 13 of 1995.

4.6. Instruments Assisting Grassroots Elected Leaders in Grassroots Governance

Assisting grassroots elected leaders in grassroots governance is one among the

ways which improve governance in the local areas as it ensures the multiple organs exercising powers differently with the intention to improve the lives of people living in particular locality. The structure of local government as per Act No 7 of 1982 provides the existence of institutions at the grassroots level which work hand in hand with elected grassroots leaders. Among of these institutions includes village and Mtaa executive officers, village councils as well as various committee established in a respective to Mtaa and village.

The study interested to know to what extent these institutions are helpful for grassroots elected leaders in grassroots governance. In principle the grassroots elected leaders and various institutions established within the Mtaa and village work together to smoothing governance within a particular locality [53]. In Tanzania as far as local government is concerned the village and Mtaa chairpersons are the supreme leaders within their area of jurisdictions, others for example, village and Mtaa executive officers and various committee established after local elections tend to assist them in fulfilling the manifesto of political party in power [54]. In this context grassroots elected chairpersons cannot perform their functions well without the support from others leaders. Basing on this fact the study interested to know the extent to which village and Mtaa executive officers perform their tasks in assisting grassroots elected leaders in grassroots governance. The findings of the study provide competing views as far as their roles in grassroots governance as many respondents 50 (83%) argued in favour of them. For example, one of interview revealed that, the roles of grassroots elected leaders in grassroots governance is to provides the general frame work on how the governance should be while the remaining leaders either village or Mtaa executive officers and members of various committee execute what have been proposed by the village or Mtaa government.

The experience revealed that committees formed after local elections within the Mtaa and village theoretically are instruments to execute the decision of Mtaa or village governments, but in practice majority of the members of these committees are not working as expected, they failed to perform their tasks properly as a result grassroots governance become a disaster. The observation from three Mtaa from Ubungu Municipality revealed that some Mtaa's facing a lot of complicated issues because of mismanagement, for example the sewage system was not handled properly, some local community flow their sewage in the local roads, some they flow to neighbor spaces, some influential local community were well connected with water while others not. When the study wanted to know the reasons behind these situations the respondent had these to say:

“Our Mtaa government has various committees established to deal with issues like these but their accountability is questionable as some members are not participating on any issues arising in our street and some just their names were mentioned in the structure but they do not physically involves in any governance issues in our Mtaa”.

He added that: *“this situation creates a dilemma of accountability as many governance issues occurred in our Mtaa do not receive a fair treatment from our Mtaa government”.* To support this researcher observed a lot of sewage from the filled

chambers moved along the street road without any grassroots government interventions something dangerous to the health of the local community. The interesting point over this is that those houses with filled chambers have no pass way to allow tanker to pass-through to exploit the filled chambers something which create dilemma on how to handle such case.

In principle handling grassroots issues needs the support of every responsible individuals at the grassroots levels, elected leaders, appointed leaders, local citizen as well those employed by the government need to form the chain of accountability to ensure the proper management of grassroots governance, but a thorough observation from two councils revealed that there is a huge gap between these leaders in handling grassroots governance issues as in many circumstances dilemma of accountability accelerate poor answerability to grassroots affairs. The interview with many grassroots leaders revealed that lack of clear responsibility among grassroots leaders tends to create this dilemma of accountability.

Obviously governance below the district level in contemporary leadership experiences what is known as '*illusive leaders*'⁴ as a majority of them in the Mtaa and village are not real motivated to lead the community but many of them want to be a grassroots elected leaders for 'strategic survive' meaning that acquiring leadership position at the grassroots levels is a means for ensuring the life within the family is going on without considering the needs of the community. [55] observed that grassroots elected leaders were protected by rich peasants and traders who assure their victory in local elections with the promise of protecting their interests. This reflect what is going on in contemporary grassroots leadership whereby for the Mtaa and village chairpersons to win elections, they need to form coalition with local businessmen or peasants to sponsors their elections taking into consideration their elections do not given enough resources from their political parties.

4.7. The Relationship between Elected Grassroots Leaders and the Councils

The Local Government (District Authorities) Act 1982 (45) (2b) and the Local Government (Urban Authorities) Act 1982 (45) (2c) provide for the establishment of rural and urban LGAs as district township authorities (villages that are assuming an urban character) and village authorities. The Acts were amended in 1999 by the Local Government Laws (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act (No. 9) 1999. In terms of relationship between grassroots elected leaders and the councils, the existing structure revealed that below the level of district and municipal councils there is a number of democratic bodies practicing governance. For example, in the rural system, there is village government which is headed by village chairperson and in urban, there is Mtaa government which is headed by Mtaa chairperson. Mtaa in urban councils and village in rural councils provide a grassroots link to the ward structure up to the district and Municipal councils and mobilize participation of local people in local development.

⁴illusive leaders are the ones with the following character, Cannot or do not lead others, Exhibit weak execution skills, cannot articulate their vision, are unaware of industry trends.

In principle the relationship between grassroots elected leaders and the District and Municipal councils is regulated by what is common known as principal agent relations as the district and Municipal councils being the principal and the grassroots elected leaders being an agent, for example, district councils coordinate the activities of the township authorities and village councils, which are accountable to the district for all revenues received for day-to-day administration.

On top of that council is seen as sometimes putting responsibilities on grassroots elected officials without providing the necessary resources like financial support and educational programs to assume these responsibilities. This is a common challenge to grassroots elected leaders as many of the programs emanated from the councils were not given necessary resources for its implementation, for example in Ubungo municipality there is the programme of giving loans to Women supervised by Mtaa chairpersons but these chairpersons were not given important instruments such as education on how to execute the programme.

In principle the relationship between grassroots elected leaders and the councils are marred with complex structure, in one structure is complimentary as the local government Acts of 1982 both rural and urban councils treat the grassroots leaders as part and parcel of governance structure in the local government. In this structure the roles of grassroots elected leaders is to supervise and coordinate the programmes introduce by the district and Municipal councils to their locality hence they just compliment what have been planned by the high authority. The second view provides that the existing relationship between grassroots elected leaders and the district and Municipal councils tend to contradict with local priorities as the plans from councils conflict with the plan of the grassroots as a results dilemma of accountability dominate the relationships. In this structure many local communities claimed the presence of plans from districts and Municipal councils tend to ignore the powers of grassroots leaders to influence and initiate their programmes and projects originated from their locality. This situation creates difficult in execution of the councils programmes as results conflict of interest become the rule of the game [56].

The observation from the field revealed that, as far as grassroots governance is concerned, the local grassroots elected leaders have nothing to initiate and innovate projects and programmes at their area of jurisdiction due to various factors one being the law as the local government Acts of 1982 do not provides discretionary powers to these elected leaders to introduce new projects and programmes for the benefits of their local communities and the second is absence of financial empowerment from the councils and central government. This is a critical factor for someone to exercise discretion powers because in absence of financial capacity it is difficult to think on introducing and innovating the establishment of new projects and programmes for the benefit of local communities.

4.8. The Relationship between Grassroots Elected Leaders and Their Local Communities

For grassroots elected leaders to perform their responsibilities among other things

required is good relationship with their grassroots communities in projects and programmes execution. In most cases the relationship between the two blocks tends to influence the development in grassroots communities if there is clear structure and responsibilities to guide their relationships. In principle the village and Mtaa chairpersons depend on the support from the local communities in order to be successful in their responsibilities as many of their functions focus on local communities' challenges and opportunities for development. In addressing this relationship the study identified different form of relationship/interaction that have been seen as the criteria for assessing the capacity of grassroots elected leaders in grassroots governance. They include Nongovernmental organization, members of Village/Mtaa governments and ordinary communities.

4.9. Forms of Interaction/Relationship among Key Actors at the Grassroots Level

Effective interaction among key actors at the grassroots level is essential for building consensus, identifying and addressing the felt needs of people at the grassroots. Data gathered from the study revealed a number of ways/levels and occasions of interaction of the major stakeholders (NGOS, Members of Village/Mtaa government, ordinary grassroots residents and grassroots community religious leaders) at the grassroots level for grassroots governance. The scale of percentage was used to indicate the extent of relationship/interaction between the grassroots elected leaders and their stakeholders namely Members of grassroots government (MGG), ordinary grassroots residents (OGR), Non-government organizations (NGOS) and grassroots religious leaders (GRL).

Table 1. Forms of interaction/relationship between grassroots elected leaders and their stakeholders in grassroots governance.

Forms of relationship/Interaction	MGG	OGR	NGOS	GRL
Community forum	50%	36%	7%	7%
Political campaign	36%	50%	6%	7%
Launching and handling community projects	58%	21%	14%	6%
General assembly meeting	61%	25%	9%	5%
Attending general assembly meeting	62%	24%	8%	6%

Source: Author, 2025.

The findings of the study revealed the diverse modes of communication or interaction among the key development actors in the grassroots areas. Notwithstanding these diverse modes, the study established that the most common mode and form of interaction between grassroots elected leaders and their development actors is the interaction with Members of grassroots government such as village and Mtaa executive officers and members of Mtaa and village governments. This is the best for grassroots governance as the people who are responsible for managing grassroots programmes and projects tend to interact frequently each other.

The implication of this is that grassroots elected leaders get enough support from other members of government at their locality. On the other sides the interactions tend to decrease as you move away from the grassroots government members. **Table 1** summarized the findings.

The findings further revealed that the interaction/relationship between grassroots elected leaders and ordinary residents increase only in one area of political campaign perhaps due to realization that ordinary residents are the one who can put them into the office or not, therefore nearest to local elections grassroots elected leaders tends to create a good relationship with their voters in order to win elections. One of the respondents added that: *“village and Mtaa chairpersons tends to be busy in dealing with ordinary residents issues nearest to the local elections than any periods because they know that their survive in the offices depend on the grassroots residents vote.”*

In case of nongovernmental organizations there is less interaction with grassroots elected leaders because of the fact that most of activities of these organizations are outside the government structure, they are funded by private individuals or organizations and in most cases they are betrayed by grassroots elected leaders as an important instrument to improve their capacity in grassroots governance. For instance the interview with one of the respondent revealed that NGO'S are important package for grassroots development as the more the grassroots elected leaders engage to work with nongovernment organizations the more the capacity to provide essential services to the community.

In fact nongovernmental organizations are important agent for grassroots development outside the government structure, they always provides additional experiences as well as supplementary services and information which cannot guarantee by the government. For example issues like environmental protections, proper land use plan, women empowerment and good governance are some areas needed to be pushed by nongovernment organizations in the grassroots levels as most of the government agencies preaching on these issues are centralized at the district level to the national level instead of grassroots areas.

In addition to that, the interaction with grassroots religious leaders is very low compared to other stakeholders, this is also a remarkable weakness as far as the capacity of grassroots elected leaders in grassroots governance is concerned because religions in Tanzania are the instruments which bind the people together, so anything which is supported by religious leaders is mostly like to be supported by their followers. For example in some country like Ghana grassroots religious leaders present an opportunity as a major medium of communication for involving the key actors in grassroots decision making. It means that involving religious leaders in grassroots governance issues imply that majority of residents have the chance of contributing to the decision making in their various localities development programmes.

The study further intended to know the influence of these relationship in capacitating grassroots elected leaders in grassroots governance, discussions with

grassroots elected leaders revealed that, interaction with grassroots community is significance importance for grassroots development as many projects and programmes at grassroots levels are implemented through participatory approach. In principle community involvement in planning and execution of grassroots projects is the fundamental idea in liberal democracy in which the idea of *‘what touch all should be discussed by all’* prevailed in many emerging democracy like Tanzania whereby under decentralization by devolution the planning and implementation of grassroots projects become the basic responsibilities of the local people and their leaders, but the main challenges as portrayed above is weak involvement of grassroots community in decision making of the matters affecting their lives.

4.10. Grassroots Leaders and Political Party

One of interesting issues in contemporary democratic governance in Tanzania is the power and influence of political party when it comes to the issues of elections. Being a member of political party, grassroots elected leaders are subject to political party scrutiny before contesting for the position [57]. In many circumstances political party plays important role in democratic governance as all elected leaders in local and general elections in the case of Tanzania should be the member of a political party if he or she wants to contest for any political post. The study interested to know the influence of political party as far as grassroots elected leaders are concerned. One of the key role of political party is the nomination of the candidates as all candidates within a party should campaign in intra party competitions before competing with other political parties. Basing on the political system in Tanzania the experience revealed that all 60 respondents argued for the role political party in grassroots governance is to nominate the candidate who will run for particular elections, this to large extent shape the behaviour of candidate as they required to carry political party manifesto during intra party as well as inter-party competitions.

Apart from nomination, political parties shapes the behaviour of candidates to avoid individual discretion and setting uniform standards to be followed by all candidates. The study interested to know to what extent the candidate or the elected leaders is free to exercise his/her powers without the influence of the nomination authority. The findings revealed that the candidate for the political post at grassroots governance is subject to party appointment, campaign, party directives, party instructions even in the office he/she hold, this to a large extent affect individuals' capacity as far as grassroots governance is concerned. For example, many grassroots leaders in local Tanzania are the members of CCM ruling party, their accountability and responsibility depend on party endorsement as they can even be dismissed from party membership if he/she is act against to party interest. This to a large extent affects their capacity to delivery services to the people as the power of nomination authority has no end as they continue to regulate them, to use them for a political gain such as attracting new members, house to house campaign regardless they hold government post not political party post.

The continuation of political interferences is witnessed as area of grassroots leaders in grassroots governance has also been vulnerable to political influences as many grassroots elected leaders 20 (33%) interviewed, for example, complained about political interference in the grassroots governance by their respective political parties, they cited orders and directives on how to govern grassroots community, this kind of interference to a large extent acts as a barrier to the grassroots leaders in their grassroots governance.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusions

From the observed findings, the study draws the following conclusions: first, under inappropriate law and inappropriate functional relations between the councils and grassroots elected leaders, grassroots governance is difficult if not impossible to comprehend; at best, it is likely to remain an elusive phenomenon.

Second, the incapacity, negligence and laxity of the grassroots elected leaders in grassroots governance create antagonistic between grassroots leaders and their local citizens as well as local citizens and their government and political party in power. In this context some grassroots elected leaders have an opportunity to act according to their wishes and not according to the needs and demands of local citizen.

Third, the organizational and management capacity of the grassroots elected leaders is essential for appropriate grassroots governance. The grassroots elected leaders' management structure, which is highly influenced by the political party, is unlikely to guarantee effective grassroots governance in a pluralist society.

Lastly, the incapacity of the grassroots elected leaders in grassroots governance is complex. On one hand, it is planned and organized by a political party and therefore beyond the control of the grassroots citizen. On the other hand, it is organizational and personal because some forces which incapacitate the grassroots elected leaders are internal and can therefore be internally constrained. Therefore, a strategy for improving the grassroots elected leaders in grassroots governance needs to take into consideration this complex nature of the problem.

5.2. Recommendations

First, the government should strive to involve the people in the whole process of enacting the law especially from the initial stages of stakeholders' participation to the enactment of the final draft. As revealed in this study one of the challenges observed is inadequate involvement of the people in the formulation of the local government Act and its enabling legislations. As a result the content of the law largely represents the interests of those who were involved in its formulation. Second, the government should encourage the people to have a tendency to read various government enactments so as to increase awareness of what the governments execute and their roles in government programmes and projects. As noted in this study one of the challenges is the involvement of local citizens in managing local

affairs. Having knowledge of government legislations will enable one to know their responsibility in grassroots governance.

Third, the government of Tanzania should enact or amend the existing local government Act of 1982 and its enabling legislation. The law is very weak as far as powers, discretion and motivation are concerned. As observed in this study one of the challenges the absence of powers and discretion to grassroots elected leaders, increasing powers and discretion will be a panacea to grassroots governance as they will be able to manage according to their locality.

Fourth, among the challenges noted by the study are the terms and conditions of the nomination of grassroots elected leaders, who are nominated by a political party to contest for the post. The government needs to review the existing law so as to allow an independent candidate to contest for hamlet/village chairperson. Such review will give elected independent candidates the opportunity to work according to the needs of local communities rather than the needs of political parties.

Fifth, the government should strengthen the power of the local citizens, NGOs and other private individuals against the decisions of grassroots elected leaders if those decisions are against the needs of the communities. As noted in this study, the participation of non-government organizations in grassroots governance is not regulated by government enactment rather than the willingness of local leadership. This will facilitate having multiple sources of powers in decisions concerning local affairs.

Sixth, the government needs to review the executive power over the structure and functions of the local government. The study recognizes a need for “political appointments” (politicized bureaucracy) within the public service due to a threat, real or perceived, of political sabotage by disloyal incumbents. As noted in the findings of the study, the executive especially the president has unrestrained power ranging from the appointment of the chief executive and other staff of the local government. There is a need for the government to empower the local government to make its own decisions without central government interference.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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