



The Impact of Transparency and Accountability on Service Delivery: An Analysis of Municipalities of Zimbabwe

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Abstract

The study was motivated by mass media reports highlighting that urban dwellers have been complaining about poor service delivery provided by the majority of municipalities in Zimbabwe. Some of these complains include issues of water supply and its quality, solid waste disposal and collection, poor road network services, and dysfunctional sewage systems. The study covered the period of 12 months (June 2012 to May 2013) and surveys were conducted in five selected cities to assess the relationship between transparency, accountability and service delivery in Zimbabwe's major cities' municipalities. The objectives of the study were to identify the tools and mechanisms used by municipalities and establish if transparency and accountability exist in the urban municipalities. Yamane's formula was used to calculate the total sample size from a total population of 2,361,751 from the five study cities and the total sample size was 100 participants. From each city, a study sample of 20 participants were randomly selected and self administered questionnaire used to collect data leading to the assessment of the relationship between transparency, accountability, and service delivery. Study used Interviewer administered questionnaire to collect data from City Administrators; leading to the evaluation of tools and mechanisms which were being used by cities municipalities. However, research revealed that the electronic print media (newspapers) used in all municipalities with only two cities, Harare and Bulawayo using the websites to publish notices and advertisements. Other tools such as Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys (PETS), Citizen Report Cards (CRD), Waste Disposal Reports and Community Property Reports tools were not being used. More than 80% of the respondents in the study were not having enough knowledge on how municipalities operate. These respondents perceived that lack of transparency and accountability also contributing to the reasons why citizens were not knowledgeable of what was happening and why certain decisions were made; resulting in increased resistance in paying their taxes and bills. Results suggest that a positive correlation between transparency, accountability and service delivery existed with Pearson correlation coefficient (r) = 0.517. From the study findings, it can be recommended that municipalities

should use websites to educate city residents and the municipal officials so that they know the importance of accountability and transparency.

Keywords: Municipalities, Tools, Mechanisms, and Corporate Governance.

INTRODUCTION

Urban municipalities of Zimbabwe derive their authority from the Urban Councils' Act: Chapter 29. Other acts that facilitate the operations of the urban municipalities are; Town Planning Act (1976), Healthy and Safety Act, Environmental Act, Zimbabwe Manpower Training and Development Act, Labour Relations Act, Road Traffic Act, Education Act, Statutory Instrument (S.I) 66 and 390 of 1992, by-laws and Environmental management. The successful operation of urban authorities depends on the utilisation of the regulations which form an integral part of the legislation or laws of the country. The city's overall operations must be complimented by those enactments to the benefit of stakeholders but most of the cities' municipalities in Zimbabwe are failing to provide good service to the citizens (Denhere *et al.*, 2011; Mukarati, 2013). According to Mukarati (2013) Engineers from Harare Municipality agreed that poor quality water was being supplied to Harare residents. This resulted from the fact that treatment plants at Morton Jaffray are not in good shape (Mukarati, 2013) and that lake Chivero was badly polluted with industrial waste and water weeds (Kamusoko and Musasa, 2012; Jena, 2013). Jena (2013) further stated that the water that people in Harare were consuming had a foul smell resulting from the pollutants.

Among the cities in Zimbabwe; Harare was not the only city that had been affected by heavy water pollution. Sewage system from Norton settlements were being discharged into Mhanyame River, a source of domestic water for Chinhoyi city which lies in the lower catchment of the River Mhanyame (Gogo, 2012). Chinhoyi city was facing challenges to treat and supply adequate water from Mhanyame River due to high concentration of pollutants (Mufandaedza and Kamusoko, 2012; Musademba, *et al.*, 2012). Some pollutants were noted to be a result of settlements in the upper Mhanyame catchment and poor sewage treatments which result to untreated sewage being discharged into Mhanyame River (Gumbo, 2012; Musademba, *et al.*, 2012). Bulawayo, Chegutu and Kadoma urban areas are also facing serious water challenges and residents are fetching water from boreholes as the municipalities are failing to provide adequate water to its residents (Mhlanga and Matenga, 2012).

In most cities, residential areas are characterized by, poor road networks, unorganized solid waste disposal mechanisms erratic water supply, and dysfunctional sewage treatment systems (Musarurwa and Runyowa, 2013). The situation of these cities has been further exacerbated by Zimbabwe's year 2000 economic meltdown. According to Mwase (2012) sports facilities and shopping malls owned by most municipalities have been greatly affected by poor service delivery and some have since been closed, i.e.

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swimming pools in Chitungwiza and Rufaro Marketing brand owned by city of Harare whose infrastructure has greatly deteriorated. According to Ndoro (2012) Chitungwiza resident have been complaining that at times there is no refuse collection leading to illegal and unorganized dumping sites in many parts of the town. These sites have become a health hazard; they attract mosquitoes, rats and cockroaches. Unorganized solid waste dumping and inadequate supply of clean domestic water usually leads to cases of disease outbreaks like malaria, cholera and typhoid (Denhere *et al.*, 2011). In 2008, major cholera outbreaks were reported in most cities including Kadoma, Chegutu, Chinhoyi, and Harare (WHO, 2008; Mukandavire *et al.*, 2011). Many cases of typhoid have been reported in Harare in areas like Kuwadzana and Glen View and thirteen typhoid cases have also been reported in Chegutu (Muperi, 2013). All these outbreaks have been linked to inadequate supply of domestic water to cities' residents (WHO, 2008; Mukandavire *et al.*, 2011).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Study site

The study was conducted in five selected major cities in Zimbabwe which are Harare, Bulawayo, Chinhoyi, Chegutu, and Kadoma shown in figure 1. The city of Harare had a population of 1 486 767 people, city of Bulawayo 655 675 people, City of Kadoma 90 109 people, City of Chegutu 49 832 people, and City of Chinhoyi 79 368 people (ZimStat, 2012).



Figure 1: Map of Zimbabwe showing location of the study Cities

Sample Size Calculation

Yamane's formula (Yamane, 1967) was used to calculate the sample size which is given below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N (e)^2}$$

Where: n – Sample size
 N – Population
 e – Margin of error of 0.1

The total population used in the study was 2 361 751.

$$\begin{aligned} n &= \frac{2\,361\,751}{1 + 2\,361\,751(0.1)^2} \\ &= 100 \end{aligned}$$

Therefore the sample size used for the study was 100 respondents.

Data Collection and Analysis

In each city, simple random sampling technique was used to select 20 city residents and self administered questionnaires were used. The questionnaires were hand delivered to the selected respondents. Each respondent was given up to five days to complete and return the questionnaire. The collected data were analysed for correlation using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) version 20.

To get a better understanding of the city's characteristics, key-informants (City Administrators) were also interviewed. An interviewer administered questionnaire was used to gather data leading to a better understanding of tools and mechanisms for transparency and accountability.

Results and Discussion

The study revealed that councillors' community meetings and other public meeting were rarely conducted in almost all cities in the study. As shown in figure 2, 60% of the respondents perceived that public and councilors' meetings were rarely conducted with 20% of the respondents stating that these meetings were never done. The respondents perceived that councillors do not hold meetings with city residents because they feel that once they were voted into office the public has nothing to do with municipal administration. Meetings are essential as they enhance transparency and accountability and assist the local authorities to account to the public (Anonymous, 2008; Gonzales de Asis, 2000; Pristina, 2009; Yilmaz, 2008; Joshi, 2010). The toolkit series postulated that these public meetings are essential as they help the municipality officials to solicit information and views of the citizens and they also allow the better flow of information from the citizens to the municipal officials and also from the municipal officials to the citizens (UN Habitat, 2004).

Tools and Mechanisms being used in Urban Councils

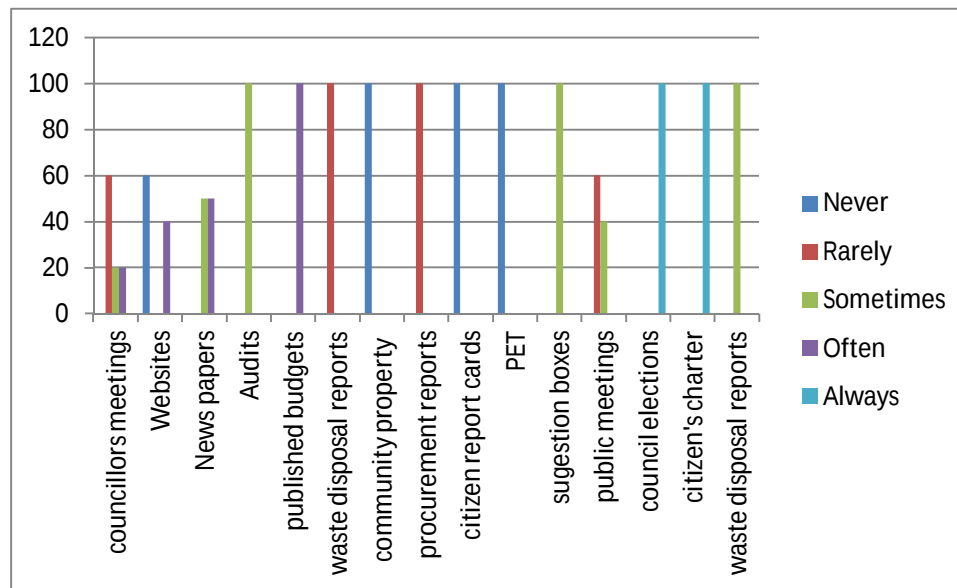


Figure 2: Tools and mechanisms that are being used in Urban Councils to support the process of transparency and accountability.

The study revealed that cities of Harare and Bulawayo make use of website to publish notices and advertisements as a major communication tool. The other communication tools being used by the cities include electronic print media (Newspapers). These tools are used to advertise for any activities including publishing audit results and annual budgets. But 33% of the respondents highlighted that the procurement and waste disposal reports are rarely published for public use and awareness. Community facilities reports are also not published in the Zimbabwean municipalities, but the Citizen's Charters are available in all the respective municipalities.

Recently all municipalities in Zimbabwe's cities have now been placed under the Audit Controller management and this delays the auditing process. The procurement books were not regularly audited hence reports could not be published. Community Property facilities reports (CPF), Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys (PETS), and Community Report Cards (CRD) were not in place in all cities under the study. The interviewed town clerks sited that CPF, PETS, and CRD were not mandatory for Zimbabwe's municipalities.

Transparency and Accountability in the Municipalities

On average 43% of the respondents perceived that there is no accountability and 18% were not sure but seven percent of the respondents agreed that there is accountability by their city municipalities. Majority of the respondents; 41% neither agreed nor disagreed that the City Council's books were regularly audited, they were not sure. While 20% disagreed that the books were audited but 5% strongly agree. Thirty three percent of the respondents strongly disagreed that the audit results were published on time and in an effective manner and 31% were not sure, they neither agreed nor disagreed but 3% strongly agreed that the results were very much published in a timely

and effective manner. More than 30% of the respondents perceived that municipality budgets and salary / wage scales were not being published and open to the rate payers. These budgets are crucial since they reflect the focused expenditure.

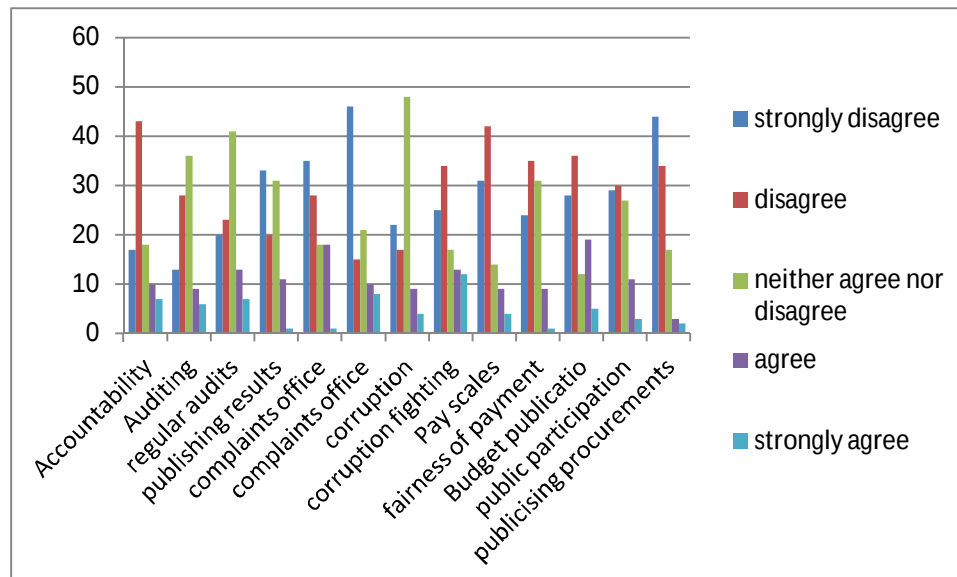


Figure 3: Transparency and Accountability in the urban councils

The study revealed that corruption is also a major problem in most cities' municipalities; ranging from the top management to the least employee. All the respondents reflect that they were aware of corrupt activities in their municipalities; but the issue on how these were being handled varied. More than 40% of the respondents were indifferent when they were asked, if they were knowledgeable on how their municipalities were managing issues of corruption. This reflects that the majority of residents did not know how corruption issues were being handled.

Moreover, most city municipalities lack transparency and accountability in all their operations. Results in figure 3 shows that residents are aware that their municipalities lack transparency and accountability. The municipalities do not make use of suggestion boxes though they have them in place. These only suggest that the municipalities' administrators just do not want to practice transparency and accountability due to negligent. Majority of the respondents suggested that a better mechanism for airing their complaints should be availed by city authorities. Forty eight percent (48%) of the respondents perceived that suggestion boxes were the only way used to air residents' complaints directly to municipality authorities. They suggested that the establishment of a complaints office besides the use of suggestion boxes.

The relationship between Transparency, Accountability and Service Delivery

The respondents indicate that service delivery is poor in most municipalities, with 83% of the respondents perceiving that transparency and accountability was related to poor

service delivery. Examples of services highlighted in the study were; road maintenance, solid waste disposal, domestic water treatment and supply, and health service delivery. The service delivery in all the study sites were ranked of poor quality and related to accountability and transparency. Thus, suggesting that a relationship exist between transparency, accountability and service delivery. The respondents perceived that when rate payers do not know what is happening to their paid money; they delay in paying their due rates thinking that the money will be misused. Such situations have got negative effects on service delivery. A two tailed Pearson correlation test confirmed that a positive correlation existed between transparency, accountability, and service delivery existed with “r” value of 0.517 at 1% level of significance.

CONCLUSION

In light of research findings it can be concluded that only citizen’s charter, council elections, and electronic print media were being efficiently used compared to other tools such as public expenditure tracking surveys, citizen report cards, and community property reports. Other tools like councillors’ meetings, audits, published budgets, waste disposal reports, suggestion boxes, and municipality public meetings were being rarely used by most of the municipalities. Online media (website) were being used by Harare and Bulawayo cities only. The inconsistency use of the tools and mechanisms contributed to a reduced level of transparency and accountability in most cities municipalities in Zimbabwe.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made using the findings of the study:

- City Councils were recommended to provide information to the residents so that they know what will be happening. When people participate in city councils, they are able to give constructive ideas that enhance service delivery. The citizens need to know the budgets, the cash flow statements, the debts, procurements, the payment scales and how other operations are handled. When people do not know, they end up assuming wrong things like the municipal officials are overpaying themselves or the funds were misused. With these thoughts people end up not paying their taxes and rates further compromising the operations and the service delivery by the city councils.
- The cities municipalities should intensively use posters and flyers, television and radio, to announce the date and time when meetings will be held and when budgets will be published. When people know in advance they are able to check on the websites, buy the newspapers so that they can access the published results and attend to the meetings. When many people get information, they can give great contributions which can help in improving the quality of services.
- The cities municipalities should use public expenditure tracking surveys so that they can be able to check if the funds would have reached the intended population and would have been used for the right purpose. The use of public expenditure tracking surveys reduces the misuse of funds.

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- Cities municipalities are also recommended to use the Citizen Report Card to check if the citizens are receiving right quality services. The tool also provides feedback to the city council on the problems the citizens are facing in their areas. The citizen report card also helps to address the problem of transparency and disclosure of service quality standards and other costs that may have been incurred unnecessarily like bribes.
 - Cities municipalities should educate and encourage incumbent Councillors about the importance of conducting Councillors' meetings and participating in the budget. When people feel they are part of the decision making they feel as part of the team and pay their taxes and rates. This improves the cash flows and service delivery process.
 - The tools like suggestion boxes should be regularly used as this supports accountability. Workshops should be organised and all stakeholders should attend so that they can be fully educated on the importance of transparency and accountability and how it can be fully implemented.

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Appendix 1

Urban residence questionnaire

Area of residence.....

Scale: 1 strongly disagree, 2 Disagree, 3 neither Agree or disagree 4 Agree, 5 Strongly agree

	1	2	3	4	5
Accountability and Auditing Section A 1. My City Council democratically accountable 2. My City Council is subject to independent audit					
Section B Public Meetings 3. My City Council hold public meetings					
Section C Public Complaints procedure 4. In my City Council there is an independent complaints office 5. In my City Council there other means and ways of Complaining.					
Section D Municipal Leadership 6. My City Council management is committed to fight against corruption 7. My City Council demonstrated in both words and deeds In the fight against corruption					
Section E Municipal Human Resources 8 I know the City Council payment scales? 9. The City Council payment scales and benefits fair					
Section F Municipal Budgeting					

10. The City Council budgeting process is well publicised and open to the public					
11 In my City Council the public actively and directly participate in shaping local government budget priorities					
Section G Municipal Procurement 12. The City Council procurement system is reputed to be fair 13. In my City Council procurements are advertised in advance and made known to the public? 14. The process for selecting a bidder is thorough and fair					
Section H Audit Procedures 15. My City Councils accounts are regularly audited by an independent auditor 16. The results made public in a timely and effective manner					
Section I Customer satisfaction 17. My city council provides high quality services 18. My city council efficient street lighting 19. My city council has efficient street lighting 20. My city council has efficient street lighting 21. My city council has high quality health services 22. My city council has properly maintained roads					

Appendix II

Municipality Administrators – Interviewer administered Questionnaire

How frequent do you use these Tools and Mechanisms

Tool and Mechanisms	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Councillors meetings					
Websites					
News papers					
Audits					
Published budgets					
Waste disposal reports					
Community property					
Procurement reports					
Citizen report cards					
Public expenditure Tracking surveys					
Suggestion boxes					
Public meetings					
Council elections					
Citizen's charter					
Waste disposal reports					