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The Relationship between Participatory Democracy and Digital Transformation in Tanzania

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Abstract

Democracy is something that is discussed differently from various public discourses. It should definitely be known that there is a reason for these different school of thoughts whether one looks from the left, centre or right of the political continuum. Additionally, through participatory democracy, ordinary citizens are engaged and empowered to have a voice on policy and/or decision – making process, which in turn nurtures democracy both at national and local levels. However, studies carried out in Tanzania on democratic process have not paid attention on the relationship between participatory democracy and digital transformation. Therefore, this paper focuses on addressing this relationship by looking first at how public/citizen participation and civic engagement has been increased through participatory democracy and secondly, how digital transformation succeeded in initiating public opinion on pertinent issues including politics and policies? The focal point of this paper is on the potentialities of the digital transformation in creating space for the very disadvantaged population to participate significantly in the political and public sphere.

Keywords: Participatory/Deliberative Democracy, Democratic Process, Citizens, Participation, Digital Transformation

1. Introduction

The global society is experiencing some specific developments concerning democracy. To make things tough, even defining what is democracy is becoming a multifaceted challenge because there are number of choices being developed and linked in normative theory and political practice. (Dahl, 2013) reminded that traditional approaches to democratic theory tends to come together on minimal accounts of democracy. This minimalistic school of thought considers political rights including rights of free speech, association, and suffrage are endowed to citizens, whereby through voting for their representatives in elections is one means of exercising their political rights. On the other hand, due to an unexplored normative potential, the liberal democracies give alternative elucidations on traditional accounts of democracy.

Other school of thoughts, focus on 'democratising' as expounded by (Santos & Nunes, 2004) or 'deepening democracy' as according to (Fung & Wright, 2003). This has resulted into creating a space for citizens to be at the driving seat of decision-making process. The approach birthed notions like public participation, deliberation

and citizen empowerment, which require strong political backing (Rosenberg 2007; Dryzek, 2009)). In a nutshell, participatory democracy put much more emphasis on the principle that democratic legitimacy is based on the active and enduring participation of ordinary citizens. (Doorenspleet, 2019) put it clear that in scenario like this, democracy definitely assumes an important meaning in the global citizenry's perspective.

In recent years, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have played a significant role in the field of e-governance and e-democracy at different levels be it local, national or international level. They have enabled ever more innovative arrangements of intra and interconnection and communication of citizens across global space. Citizens can now call for petitions in case of violation of human rights or any matter of interest that requires legislative process. Moreover, through social networking elected representatives as well as political parties can engage directly with the members of their constituents as part of their democratic processes. On the other hand, citizens' voices through ICT platforms can raise their voices in a situation which requires government interventions be it at local government or central/national government level.

There is no doubt that the Internet plays a significant part in the political and public sphere (Ceccarini, 2019). As (Manin, 2017) put it, digital transformation operates in the course of disintegration of the audience and public opinion space. On the contrary, there have not been a common conclusion yet on different theoretical perspectives because of the complications in evaluating and empirically substantiating the possible proto-political effects on digital revolution (Dahlgren, 2009). (Christensen, 2011) emphasized that empirically, there are no any negative relationships between the use of the Internet by citizens and their civic involvement. This leaves an open room for discussion on potential impact of digital transformation on the political sphere.It is from this background that this paper tries to address the relationship between participatory democracy and digital transformation especially in the developing democracies of the world. Specifically, this paper aim to respond on the following questions:

1) Has participatory democracy pave the way for increased public participation and civic engagement?
2) Has digital transformation succeeded in initiating public opinion on pertinent issues including politics and policies?

2. Theoretical Background/ Conceptualisation

The theoretical framework for this paper is centred on participatory democracy focusing on citizen participation, civic engagement and public opinion.

The current discussions on democracy reveal that many people consider it to be inviolable, and there is no any other option to replace democracy when it comes to political governance. This argument reflects what (Sen, 1999, p.15-16) says, "the practice of democracy that has won out in the modern West is largely a result of a consensus that has emerged since the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution" and it need to be exported to the rest of the world. (Sen, 1999) tries to assert that democracy is a universal value whereby (Sen, 1990, p.16) points out that "includes its intrinsic importance in human life, its instrumental role in generating political incentives, and its constructive function in the formation of values (and in understanding the force and feasibility of claims of needs, rights, and duties). These merits are not regional in character."

Apart from being a universal value, democracy for quite some time has been considered to reflect majority rule even when the public is represented by few in decision making and/or have been engaged and participated in the process of ensuring majority rule. This can be seen in the writings of (Dahl, 1989) whereby he laid down four ways establishing majority rule include: make best use of the number of people "who can exercise self-determination in collective decisions" (Dahl, 1989, p.138); highest possibility of reaching correct decision through majority rule; reaching maximum utility based on highest level of satisfaction on decisions made; and, unavailability of substitute for cost-effective rule.

Insight on Participatory Democracy

Almost for the five decades, developed democracies in North America, Western Europe, and beyond that are considered liberal societies have faced what is known as 'undemocratic challenges' including lack of accountability of rulers to ruled; party-system crises; and quasi authority government institutions, and 'challengers' including invisible discriminatory hegemony. This has result into formation of what is knowns as 'new social movements' exerting pressure on innovative and more inclusive democratic practices (della Porta & Diani, 2006).

Participatory democracy emerged in 1960s whereby scholars and practitioners brought into attention the requirement of citizens to participate in decision making collectively on issues pertained to them (Bherer, Dufour, & Montambeault, 2016). Since all social issues in one way or the other involve politics whether at local, national, regional or international levels, then participation is inevitable (Bass, Dalal-Clayton, & Pretty, 1995; Gbikpi, 2005). (Lynd, 1965) singled out two specific goals for instituting participatory democracy, these are: each person has to be entirely part in decisions that have effects (positive or negative) in his or her life; and the society on the other hand should promote and ensure total independence of the individuals as well as creating supporting environment for their participation in achieving common goal. This pave a way towards social inclusion, which ensures democratic independence between the society and political administration.

In establishing his argument on participatory democratic practices, (Rogers, 2008, p.20-21) pointed out that "...democratic participation in local community development promises to increase civic responsibility and local sustainability, in accordance with local visions of a good community, while also increasing societal experimentalism and creativity, without the need for centralized control or bureaucratic administration. Maximal democratic participation promises to provide society with an evolutionary dynamic, alongside allowing the conservation of local traditions wherever these are valued by local people, which allows local people to determine the conditions of their own existence in accordance with their shared cultural meanings, values, standards, and ideals, when they deem these to be satisfactory. This assumes that local people have sufficient knowledge, experience, skills, imagination, and motivation to decide for themselves how best to live their own lives".

Since inceptions to-date, (Bherer & Breux, 2012) elucidate that participatory democratic practices have resulted into introduction of heterogeneous participatory practices through various institutions and groups, including left- and right wings' government globally. It has also been noticed that participatory practices took pace in different settings including private sector. Non-State Actors like NGOs and Community organisations have been using participatory approaches in running their programmes and projects they implement so that their beneficiaries take initiative and action in planning for the development of their communities (Tsiga, Hofisi & Mago, 2016). New Public Governance enforced bureaucratic organisations to adopt participatory practices in order among other things, to enhance citizen participation so as to improve policy formulation and public service delivery (Nabatchi, 2010; Torfing & Triantafillou, 2013).

One of the early scholarship on this subject matter is the work of Carole Pateman (1970) who introduced a concept of participatory democracy intending to restructure democracy by putting in place structural institutions modifications for participation. (Pateman, 1970) conceptualised Greek theories of direct democracy as well as studied thoroughly the "social contract" of Jean Jacques Rousseau together with "on liberty" of John Stuart Mill. For her (Pateman, 1970), citizens should be given equal opportunity to participate in decision making process as opposed to what was offered by representative and direct democracy. Her arguments on equal participate based on the fact that representation in public sphere will not create equitable level for citizens to engage properly in decisions affecting their sustainability. She (Pateman, 1970) believed that the more citizens participate in their affairs, the more "stable system of democracy" can be achieved and maintained and at the end reach the ideal representative democracy.

As (Fisher, 2003) pointed out, generally speaking, participatory democracy is centred on scope of citizen participation. (Michels, 2011) added that according to participatory democrats, delegation of decision-making power alienates citizens from politics thus, in order for a democracy to be vital, then there should be citizen participation. (Michels, 2011, p.278) outlined three key functions of participatory democratic practices: "the first

is the educational function: citizens increase their civic skills and become more competent when they participate in public decision-making. In the second place, participatory democracy has an integrative function. Participation contributes to the development of civic virtues, citizens' feeling of being public citizens and part of their community. As a consequence, they may also feel more responsible personally for public decisions. And thirdly, participatory democracy contributes to a greater legitimacy of decisions".

The issue of civic engagement is somewhat significant too. Citizen engagement in social networks and voluntary organization is considered to be important in enhancing satisfaction and to be specific, in democratic practices (Putnam, 2000). This allows individual citizens to express their interests and demands on local or/and national/state government; being able to air out their voices to responsible institutions that in turns increase the level of inclusion. In discussing about citizen engagement, (Michels, 2011) put it clear that engagement make citizens more competent. It is through these social networks where citizens learn civic skills and hence, networks turn to be schools for democracy as they help members to understand what is going on and become active participant in public life, trustworthy and reciprocators.

A lot has been narrated by various scholars but in a nutshell, the discussion about participatory democracy is centred on these following foundations: firstly, participatory democracy involves active political participation at all levels within the society; secondly, there are must be a direct citizen engagement in dialogue and decision making; thirdly, participatory democracy requires widened space to ensure full citizen participation in governance of their affairs; fourthly, continual capacity building is vital for community empowerment towards active participation; and fifthly, participatory democracy depends on enhancement of the role of civil societies in area of their jurisdictions.

Insight on Deliberative Democracy

Deliberative democracy on the contrary, is derived from the conceptions that aimed at stressing broad quality of the democratic space in order to untangle from cultural hegemony, power relationships, and unconformity in thoughts, feelings, and actions to objective values. The Anglo-American and European philosophical traditions grounded on the works of Rawls and Habermas is the key foundation for deliberative democracy (Rawls 1993, 1984; Habermas, 1992, 1984). (Habermas, 1984) sees democracy as a sphere of public discussion that is controlled by "the unforced force of the better argument" and resulting to the common good. Whereas (Elster, 1998, p.3) points out that "democracy revolves around the transformation rather than simply the aggregation of preferences". On common declaration about deliberative democracy is that, "political choice, to be legitimate, must be the outcome of deliberation about ends among free, equal, and rational agents" (Elster 1998, p.5). That is to say, it "rests on argumentation, not only in the sense that it proceeds by argument, but also in the sense that it must be justified by argument" (Elster 1998, p.9).

Different scholars have studied deliberative democracy and defined it based on the assertions established by Rawls and Habermas. For instance, deliberative theory has been divided into "deliberative and communicative" (Young, 2000), "liberal, constitutional and discursive" (Dryzek, 2000), "deliberative and agonist" (Mouffe, 2000), "deliberative democracy and democratic deliberation" (Mansbridge, 2007), "type one and type two" (Bachtiger et al. 2010), "liberal deliberative and participatory deliberative" (della Porta, 2013) as well as "classical and radical" (Cini & Felicetti, 2018).

(Coleman, Przybylska, & Sintomer, 2015) elucidated that in various political systems around the world, deliberative innovations have been implemented in a wide range and massive quantity. This has resulted from an increased demand for more deliberative practises requiring engagement of ordinary citizens especially underrepresented ones (Curato, Dryzek, Ercan, Hendriks, & Niemeyer, 2017). Policy making processes and political affirmations call together various fora so as to draw views from the public on pertinent issues that either affects and/or will affect them directly or indirectly in the course of their implementation (Nabatchi, et al., 2012). (Barrett, Wyman, & Schatten, 2012) confirmed that findings from studies conducted on citizens' deliberations revealed that these deliberations do influence policies however, their effects differ and can be indirect. As said earlier, with regards to political affirmations, deliberative meetings are carried out likewise in parliamentary

settings and electoral environments like formulation of elections manifestos (Hendriks, 2016). Simply, deliberative democracy is more of a talk-centred kind of democracy (Curato et al., 2017). However, (Mendelberg, 2002) cautioned that talk alone can be irrational, generating enthusiastically varied results from an ideal deliberative perception.

(Curato et al., 2017), pointed out that findings in deliberative researches recommend that deliberation can modulate or weaken instead of strengthen those who occupy dominant positions. Citizens' conversations can destroy or impair the quality of influence of elite framing (Druckman & Nelson, 2003). Adding to this, (Niemeyer, 2011) revealed that deliberative mini-publics such as citizens' juries can fathom 'symbolic politics' or elite manipulation of public discourse over selective assembly of fact and shaping of nuance to support their particular political view. One example can be cited from the National Public Policy Conferences in Brazil, which is considered to be one of the successful public deliberation exercises at a national level whereby it has empowered ordinary citizens to influence public policy once been given an opportunity to participate in significant deliberation (Pogrebinschi & Samuels, 2014). In short, these examples evidenced that deliberative democracy provides room for ordinary political stakeholders to make, oppose, and closely consider on ideas, alternatives, and discussions.

(Curato et al., 2017), assert that in deliberative democracy, decision making is done by either voting, negotiation, or workable agreements that require agreement on a way forward and not much of the reasons to execute it. (Dryzek & Niemeyer, 2012) suggest that deliberation should recognise pluralism and exert meta-consensus vigorously, which encompasses mutual recognition of the acceptability of various values, inclinations, verdicts and discussions carried out by other stakeholders.

One of the important point of departure is that participation and deliberations go together. (Paterman, 2012) in drawing a distinction between the two, argued that deliberative democracy failed to acknowledge participatory democracy well enough instead it paid much attention on 'new deliberative bodies'. A 'participatory society' according to (Pateman (2012, p.10) is "where various aspects of our social and political lives are democratised are not distinct from deliberative democrats' vision of a society where all citizens affected by a decision have capacities and opportunities to deliberate in the public sphere". Therefore, deliberations are carried out so as to augment the responsiveness of democratic systems, provide an unplanned forum for policy development (Liston, Harris, & O'Toole, 2013).

Insight on Digital Transformation

Digital transformation of 21st century pave the way for enhancement democratic practices as it gave a room for ordinary citizens to speak and initiate political debates. Citizens have been given access to express and share their perceptions freely between and among each other because of the strengthened values and basics of the democracy. It is no wonder scholars since expansion of Internet in the 1990s, have been arguing on how it can aid transformation of human society. (Shayo (2019, p.857) adds up that "mobile phones and internet access have become relatively widespread, and constitutes a new important resource for citizen participation in local democracy and its decentralized crowdsourcing methods". This is aided by an increasing proportion of Internet users who are always-on via portable devices that let them to use a mobile connection to the Internet (Ceccarini, 2019). (Welp & Breuer, 2014) exposed that there have been intensely disputed questions about the impact of ICTs on political processes and outcomes, as well as social classes, that is, position of persons within a social group, category, geographic region, or social unit.

Internet as a main platform for this digital transformation it is the most useful and powerful instrument or vehicle of communication that increases transparency in the conduct of all branches of the government (the executive, the legislature and the judiciary); expand the room for access to information, and facilitate active citizen participation in building democratic societies (Olengurumwa, 2016). (Avila, et al., 2011), expounded that citizens' contributions on policymaking process can easily be facilitated through new and improved channels of

participation as well as citizen monitoring of government due to an increased transparency and accountability as a result of technological innovations.

In studying about the impact of digital transformation on political participation (Boulinanne, 2009), endorses positive and modest findings on citizen engagement. However, findings reveal that there are well established elements, which are like standards that moderate political participation within a public space for instance political interest and social capital. (Bimber, Stohl & Flanagin, 2008) expounded further that digital transformation will be a cause towards deepening democratic division particularly between those who do have skills and resources to enable their engagement on political process and those without them.

Furthermore, (Chadwick, 2012) clarified that diversity of digital architectures and their various uses, does not necessarily depends by the socio-demographic features of users of internet but also, depend on the particular category of political participation. On the other hand, the impact pf digital transformation on democratic processes with reference to (Anduiza, Jensen & Jorba, 2012), can be reflected in the following perspectives; political participation, consumption of political information and political attitudes. According to (Anduiza, Jensen, & Jorba, 2012), political participation entails citizens' actions towards intended political outcomes; consumption of political information referring to trust in the trustworthiness of mainstream media especially government owned media houses as well as other media houses that are heavily censored by the State; and with political attitudes referring to operational independence from being exposed to different channels.

The digital democratic innovations as means of electronic participation have brought forward a game-changer for democratic practices, governance issues as well as representation around the globe unlike the traditional means of political participation including elections, petition-signing and protests. (Pogrebinschi, 2017) believes that democratic innovations enhanced by the digital transformation in the long-run will change the nature of democracy and its institutions apart from what has been observed so far that is, increased quality of citizens engaged in democratic practices through the use of internet. For (Pogrebinschi, 2017), digital transformation will impact democratic practices across the globe in the following aspects:

> "**First**, digital innovations may change how democracy works by making it more inclusive and more deliberative. Real democratic inclusion takes place when the latter is understood not in terms of the number of citizens and volume of participation, but in terms of the groups targeted and the policy issues addressed by the new means of e-participation.
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> **Second**, digital democratic innovations may change how governments rule by making them more accountable and effective. The most innovative and democratic institutional designs are today found among those who rely on ICT tools to allow citizens to collaborate with their government by interacting with the public administration. Forms of interactive administration have evolved as both internet sites and mobile applications (apps), where citizens can identify problems in their cities and propose solutions to fix them.
>
> **Third**, digital innovations may change how representation is performed by turning it more responsive. Digital innovations have been making representation less virtual by virtual means."

(Pogrebinschi, 2017), summarises that the digital transformation apart from enhancing citizen participation, it enhances also political inclusion, improve accountability, eases administration of rule of law, and amplifying responsiveness, which in turn they strengthen democratic practices. It is quite open that through digital transformation social equality has been improved whereby the voices and underrepresented demands from traditionally disadvantaged populations have now been taken on board. Studies show that there is a growing number of active smartphones users in some of the least developed countries whereby these gadgets turned to be efficient tools on enhancing social inclusion in these countries (Sugie, 2016). The findings about the major shift on digital divide is completely the opposite of what has been discussed by (Smith, 2009, p.151) by pointing out that "one of the main challenges facing Internet-based engagement is the well documented 'digital divide' that exists in terms of access to and proficiency in ICT".

3. Participatory Democracy and Digital Transformation experienced in Tanzania

3.1 How participatory democracy paved the way for increased public participation and civic engagement

From the theoretical framework presented in the previous section, it is very clear that citizen participation in democratic practices is significant and hence calls for innovative ways to strengthening representative democracy (Grönlund, Bächtiger, & Setälä, 2014; Smith, 2009). Democratic innovations to be participative and inclusive must ensure the voices of voiceless within a given society are well linked up to an existing governance structure be it local or national level (Michels & Binnema, 2018). This means, participatory democracy should be considered as a creative, social process of gathering together nonconforming voices, different skills, thoughts, and experiences, as well as a multiplicity of goals, morals, and tenets, so as to reach best consensus.

Furthermore, participatory democracy is a social evolution process that ensures shared commitment in achieving good life and societal well-being encompasses shared understanding of all people who are concerned with the outcome of any proposed action within their local environment. Regardless of our own assumptions, consensus about proposed problems and solutions worthy of consideration can be reached through citizen inclusion and participation. Nevertheless, there is no completely agreed principles and methodologies for overcoming challenges but through participation there is a room for criticism and persuasion on course of action to be taken whereby whatever the outcome, participants are more than willing to accept it. Thus, it can be said that participatory democracy is unrestricted that is, a process of discovery of the best course of action, but not relativistic. In principal there is no best course of action hence, the decision making process should be an ongoing fine-tuning, re-examination and criticism, thereby adapting and amending the course of action to cater for unforeseen consequences, events and circumstances. In a nutshell, participatory democracy can be regarded as an eloquent, progressive, didactic, and experimental process.

One of the very popular form of democratic innovations is open forum whereby citizens participate in face-to-face interactions and come into agreement on number of pertinent issues (Smith, 2009, p.30–31), for instance in participatory planning and budgeting popularly known in Tanzania as Opportunities and Obstacles to Development (Mwasaga, 2019). This is a formal way of involving citizens in deciding about their fate but there are other informal ways whereby citizens participate freely by organizing themselves and airing their concerns in number of pertinent issues they are facing in the community.

Findings from the Assessment of Decentralisation by Devolution (D by D) in Tanzania conducted by (Lyon, Zilihona & Masanyiwa, 2018), revealed that the reform agenda set by the Government of Tanzania is broadly considered to have been successful in increasing awareness and practice of D by D at all levels, due to the established structures and impact of local government reforms. There is an increased people's participation in politics and local governance, which is manifested through increased participation in local elections especially at the very grassroots level, in planning and budgeting mechanisms through the Opportunities and Obstacles to Development (O&OD) planning methodology. The Assessment report reveals that up to 90% of the villages and wards in the sample LGAs were submitting participatory development plans. Citizens were also contributing labour and materials in construction of infrastructure.

Likewise, findings from the Assessment show increased transparency and citizen's demand for accountability (Lyon, Zilihona & Masanyiwa, 2018). The normal practice is to send the village meetings' meetings to the ward level where the issues are discussed and kept on minutes, and then after sent up to the Council for further decisions. In addition to this, citizens' demands for financial transparency and accountability is also increasing through their elected representatives and participation of women, youth and other disadvantaged groups in local governance is increasing as noted by LGAs' staff (Lyon, Zilihona & Masanyiwa, 2018).

However, apart from the good response on citizen participations, findings from the same assessment carried out by (Lyon, Zilihona & Masanyiwa, 2018), revealed that the general public lost interest on participating in community meetings due to the fact that they have continue to experience little action and/or changes on their identified priorities. This was also observed by the research findings from the Ibrahim Index for African Governance (IIAG, 2015), which revealed that since 2011, Tanzania has shown poorer performance in three out of the four governance categories (governance, rule of law, human rights and economic opportunity).

3.2 How digital transformation succeeded in initiating public opinion

In the modern times, it has been argued by different scholars that participatory democracy should focus much more on extensive decentralisation, citizen initiatives and decisive referendums. Although, there has been a slight change on citizen participation on local governance issues in Tanzania as observed by (Lyon, Zilihona & Masanyiwa, 2018) in their assessment, a new door brought by digital transformation provides access to citizens to participate on other issues affecting their welfare. Digital platforms are seen as "new hope" for participatory democracy as they do allow citizens to directly engaged in the decision making process as well as giving reviving local democracy (Gerodimos, 2001).

According to quarterly communication statistics published in the second quarter of ending June 2019 by the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA)[2], internet penetration in Tanzania extended to 43 percent, with 51.22 per cent of the mobile phone subscribers being using internet that is, out 43.49 million mobile subscribers at least 22.28 million were internet users. These data when computed to the estimated population in Tanzania which stands at 58 million, show that about 38.5 percent of the population has access to internet. TCRA (2018) revealed that the trends of internet penetration and mobile penetration for the period of five years starting from 2013 - 2018 show that there are positive growths from (21%) to (43%) and (61%) to (81%) respectively. This means, at one-third of the population can now utilise the avenue provided by digital transformation to engage themselves into fruitful political process, deliberation, and impact on public policy as important aspects of democracy in action.

This avenue brought by digital transformation does not restricted by national or global sphere, that is to say, nothing can supersede debate and deliberations made at local level but instead national and global public spheres supplement more voices and experiences to the local public sphere (see also: Castells, 2005; Marginson, 2008).

Literature reviewed in the previous section (Smith, 2009) depicted that digital divide existed to some extent in the past decade but digital revolution is now gathering pace as average citizens take an active role in public discourse including engaging politically on a very different level. Maria Sarungi, who is a founder of Change Tanzania Platform concurred with this truth that #ChangeTanzania platform started as a social media hashtag but abruptly turned into an online social movement with an app and website registering lots of petitions and initiatives ranging from demands for security cameras at bus stops to a community beach clean (Ridgwell, 2017). She points out that with social media platforms, citizens' voices can be amplified because of the effects brought up by the digital revolution. (Shayo, 2019) added that digital platforms including Uchaguzi platform and social media page such as Facebook *Taarifa Za Uchaguzi Tanzania* and Twitter account *@ChaguziTanzania*, promoted novel forms of citizen collective action in monitoring integrity of local elections and general elections in 2014 and 2015 respectively. All these platforms served as an example of digitally empowered citizens to take part in local democracy online in Tanzania.

During the last general elections in Tanzania of 2015, social media platforms especially Twitter, WhatsApp and Facebook were highly used for the first time for campaigning purposes. Social media gave voters, especially youths, a platform to vocalise their strong aspiration for change.

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[2] https://www.tcra.go.tz/images/TelCom_Statistics_June_2019.xlsx.pdf

By the time of elections, 60% of all voters were youths under age of 35 years (NEC, 2016). Most of them were challenging the status-quo of the past regime (4th phase government since independence of 1961). They called for changes with hashtags like #Wearerestless and #YouthPower.

One of the negative effects of social media is destructive debates as well as spread of fake news. During the campaigns, there were reports of opposition smear campaigns conducted on WhatsApp and it was being used by 'unofficial' campaigners to reach voters who by that time were estimated to be around 8 million people. Memes were circulated to create widespread mimicry of party leaders. One meme states that presidential candidate from the ruling party CCM was corrupt, while on the other side, there was a meme questioned opposition party candidate's health. Also, Tanzania's mainstream media adopted a viral content from WhatsApp campaigns whereby there was a video shared across showing a candidate representing coalition of opposition parties (popularly known as UKAWA) attracting voters on the grounds of religion. This was picked up by Newspapers and gave ruling party candidate a chance to condemn was regarded as divisive politics. This shows how digital platforms were key influencer to the mainstream political coverage in Tanzania during the last general elections of 2015. Discussions on digital platforms proved that the electorate was engaged and sought to make a difference. (Shayo, 2016) pointed out clearly that the use of digital platforms offers plenty proof and prospects for aspirants, citizen and political parties to strategically recruit and mobilise potential voters. In addition, I concur with (Shayo, 2017) that digital transformation has a great role in transforming interactions between local politicians and the general public in democratic engagements due to the fact that ordinary citizens are empowered to have a voice by new electronic means from where they are.

As it has been revealed by the assessment done by (Lyon, Zilihona & Masanyiwa, 2018), citizens at the lower level of political administration have lost passion in engaging into policy and/or decision -making processes within their localities but digital technology provide means for the local government authorities to enhance participation and create more inclusive and cohesive local communities as well as to take on board all initiatives brought up by citizens in upholding democratic society (Shayo, 2019). In order for an online participation to bring impact, (Arias, Garcia, & Corpeno, 2015, p.185) emphasized that "people to be aware of what is happening and to be able to participate in the country's political processes".

4. Conclusion

This paper addressed the relationship between participatory democracy and digital transformation especially in the developing democracies of the world, Tanzania being one of them. Specifically, it responded on two key questions: firstly, has participatory democracy pave the way for increased public participation and civic engagement? And secondly, has digital transformation succeeded in initiating public opinion on pertinent issues including politics and policies?

Theoretically, participatory democracy still holds grounds in developing democracies around the globe as it gives rooms for disadvantaged citizens to engage into politics especially in those scenarios where representative democracy cannot avail. The most important thing to consider is the degree of political inclusiveness of provided by the practices of participatory democracy. The questions remained to be: to what extent are the viewpoints of the most disadvantaged citizens incorporated in such democratic practices? And to what magnitude are their expressions publicly reached at?

On the other hand, theoretical background on participatory democracy offered an important lesson about empowering ordinary citizens in the policy and/or decision –making process. The most significant questions are: how often are their proposals taken into consideration by decision -makers? To what extent these proposals will bring about sustainable impact in their localities? The answer to these questions depend on the magnitude of citizen empowerment, the degree of political inclusiveness and quality of public discourse as observed by (della Porta, 2007).

Another aspect that need to be considered is a role digital transformation has on democratic process. This creates more opportunities for citizen participation in local democracy using available, accessible and affordable digital

platforms to be crucial. However, (Lahmann, Otto, Djordjevic, & Maire, 2017, p.7) reminds that, "alongside the countless advantages it offers, the internet creates almost as many challenges for society-in different ways and to different extents, depending on the country concerned". For the digital transformation to bring positive impact to the democratic process in Tanzania, there is a need to continue to improve legal and regulatory framework as well as encouraging all responsible institutions to play their role without biasness. Laws that do not unnecessarily restrict the use of these digital platforms can help design a more democratic digital environment.

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