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Enhancing Basic Service Delivery through Social Accountability Mechanisms

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Abstract:

Social accountability strengthens the relationship between communities, local governments, and service providers. This article aimed to examine using three social accountability mechanisms, Integrated Development Planning, local government elections, and citizen scorecards, by municipal officials to uphold social accountability in basic service delivery in selected communities of the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality, South Africa. The paper adopted a mixed-methods approach using a questionnaire survey (N = 270), in-depth interviews (N = 20), and documentary analysis. Analysis of major findings shows that the IDP was a major tool used by the City of Tshwane to conduct public forums for accountability to citizens regarding their money. However, limited citizen participation in IDP forums hindered social accountability and basic service delivery. Findings also further show that local government elections were an effective mechanism for upholding social accountability in communities. In addition, the findings indicate that citizen scorecards were slightly effective as social accountability mechanisms, probably due to minimal citizen participation. Given the ever-contested public service environment Tshwane found itself in, the study advocates for an educative and all-inclusive social accountability campaign where citizens are encouraged to participate in IDP forums to voice their concerns and transform their communities through demanding smart service delivery.

Keywords: social accountability, service delivery, citizen participation.

通过社会责任机制加强基本服务的提供

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摘要:

社会责任加强了社区、地方政府和服务提供者之间的关系。本文旨在研究市政官员使用综合发展规划、地方政府选举和公民记分卡这三种社会责任机制，在南非茨瓦内市的选定社区中维护基本服务提供中的社会责任。本文采用问卷调查 (N = 270)、深度访谈 (N = 20) 和文献分析的混合方法。对主要调查结果的分析表明，国内流离失所者是茨瓦尼市用来举办公共论坛的主要工具，以对公民的资金负责。然而，有限的公民参与国内流离失所者论坛阻碍了社会责任和基本服务的提供。调查结果还进一步表明，地方政府选举是维护社区社会责任的有效机制。此外，调查结果表明，公民记分卡作为社会责任机制的效果略显着，这可能是由于公民参与程度最低。鉴于茨瓦内所处的公共服务环境一直存在争议，该研究倡导开展一项具有教育意义和包容各方的社会责任运动，鼓励公民参与国内流离失所者论坛，表达他们的担忧，并通过要求提供智能服务来改变他们的社区。

关键词: 社会责任、服务提供、公民参与。

1. Introduction

The decline in the delivery of public goods and services in middle and low-income countries created a space for Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and citizens to demand accountability and service delivery improvements (Borang & Grimes, 2021; Zinyama, 2021). Literature shows that many developing states are characterized by corruption in government departments and declining standards in basic services, which impact social accountability, leading to protests in communities (Pereira & Figueira, 2021). The increasing demand for social accountability by citizens, CSOs, and pressure groups indicates that knowledge on the meaning and use of social accountability mechanisms is growing (Porta, 2019). However, previous studies have not adequately dealt with how social accountability mechanisms can be used effectively to ensure that service providers account for the services rendered to the people. This study argues for a need to hold policymakers and service providers accountable for service delivery. Therefore, social accountability strengthens the relationship between communities, local governments, and service providers. The continued citizens' deprivation of basic services, including water, electricity, education, and health, due to corruption and mismanagement led to the emergence of social accountability as a weapon to fight for better governance and service delivery (World Bank, 2004). Social accountability seeks to promote accountability of service providers, although it depends on civic engagement where citizens directly participate in demanding services from public officials (World Bank, 2004). The World Bank (2001) regards social accountability as a poverty alleviation strategy seeking to emancipate the poor by demanding service providers' accountability. Citizens can use various traditional social accountability mechanisms, including advocacy campaigns, public demonstrations, and investigative journalism (Malena et al., 2004). The current social accountability forms include social audits, public expenditure tracking, policymaking and tracking. Governments can employ public commissions, oversight hearings, and committees to enhance social accountability mechanisms. Implementing some of these mechanisms across local governments can trigger

both successes and failures.

While the urge for social accountability is to improve the provision of public services, for various reasons, many municipalities in South Africa often fail to respond to endless citizen demands for accountability (Sidimba, 2021). Nevertheless, Fox (2015) affirms that social accountability mechanisms may promote the participation of CSOs and citizen groups in a manner that ensures the state's responsiveness to the demands of the public and corporations. Schroeder (2004) distinguishes four actors, citizens, local government, service providers, and government officials, who actively participate in social accountability. Peruzzotti and Smulovitz (2006) admit that social accountability fosters citizen engagement in a political process, although it is different from the political accountability of elected officials. To enhance social accountability in local government, we advocate for regular and transparent methods to hold public officials accountable through checks and balances in the three levels of government.

Achieving social accountability in service delivery is a constraint in the City of Tshwane due to different reasons such as coalition leadership, lack of compliance with legislation, political infighting, and inadequate skills (Nkomo, 2017). The failure to properly monitor and evaluate community development projects was another hindrance owing to corruption and general financial mismanagement (Auditor-General of South Africa, 2018). For example, the Hamanskraal and Themba communities within the City of Tshwane experienced severe water shortages, which sparked community protests over service delivery (Chatfield et al., 2013). To enhance social accountability in local municipalities, Doorgapersad and Ababio (2010) advocate for ten principles of good governance: participation, the rule of law, transparency, equality, responsiveness, vision, accountability, oversight efficiency, effectiveness, and professionalism. These mechanisms can be implemented using the organizational learning concept, where Tshwane, as the locus of driving change, is expected to devise alternative mechanisms that ensure that communities obtain satisfactory services by engaging in social accountability mechanisms.

Tshwane faced many obstacles, including administrative oversight, due to a coalition government, although Auditor-General of South Africa (2018) identifies irregular expenditure, the absence of performance reports, poor auditing strategies, and corrupt tendencies as challenges that hinder accountability of municipal officials. Due to these challenges, a series of service delivery protests erupted in Tshwane's communities. Nkomo (2017) blamed these on poor administrative techniques associated with political interference. Recent research reiterates that improper implementation of public policies, rampant mismanagement, and nepotism may have contributed to poor service provision in Tshwane (Dlamini, 2021; Shava & Mazenda, 2021). Based on the organizational learning theory and the institutional theory, the researchers sought to examine the effectiveness of three social accountability mechanisms, IDP, local government elections, and citizen scorecard, in enhancing basic service delivery in selected communities of Tshwane.

After the introduction, the following section contextualizes social accountability to establish its understanding in scholarly literature. This is followed by a discussion on theoretical perspectives affecting social accountability. The third section elaborates more on the three social accountability mechanisms used to uphold social accountability, followed by a discussion of methodological issues. The fifth section discusses and analyzes the findings. The last section draws conclusions and offers recommendations and directions for further research.

2. Contextualizing Social Accountability

Unpacking social accountability requires tracing the genesis of the concept from accountability. Accountability is defined as the obligation to fulfill assigned and accepted duties within the framework of the authority and resources provided. In delivering services, public accountability focuses on literally providing an account of one's activities, typically concerning agreed-upon performance standards or outcomes. Social accountability focuses on enforceability and answerability, which involves informing citizens of their powers to hold public officials accountable (Almén & Burrell, 2018). Therefore, the World Bank (2014) regards accountability as carrying out specifically defined assignments honestly, efficiently, and effectively at a minimal cost. Norris (2010) contends that accountability can be 'vertical' or 'horizontal.' Horizontal accountability is exercised among state structures, such as judicial bodies, legislature, and ombudspersons, acting as checks and balances mechanisms for protection against state power abuse. Vertical accountability exists outside state structures. In many cases, vertical accountability is exercised through periodic elections, whereas social accountability is exercised continuously based on the demand for services by citizens. The need to get the citizens' voices

recognized, rather than votes only, motivates social accountability, which is why social accountability provides a platform for political participation. Civil society organizations often engage democratic states and challenge their bureaucracies to make reforms that benefit the citizens. In the process, accountability is exercised (Naher et al., 2020).

There is no universal definition of social accountability, although scholars commonly agree that it should include two objects or subjects, the 'accounter' and the 'accountees' (Lieberman et al., 2012). Houtzager and Joshi (2008) define social accountability as "a form of civic engagement building accountability through the collective efforts of citizens and civil society organizations to hold public officials, service providers, and governments accountable for their obligations with responsive efforts." Malena and McNeil (2010) define social accountability as "the broad range of actions and mechanisms besides voting that citizens can use to hold the state accountable, actions of the government, civil society, media, and other societal actors promoting these efforts." The World Bank (2004) also explains that such mechanisms are demand-driven programs backed by the state, civil society, and citizens. The triple relationship, if well-coordinated, can enhance social accountability and increase service delivery. Claasen and Alpin-Lardies (2010) elaborate that social accountability is "how citizens demand and enforce accountability from those in power." This definition is largely concerned with citizen-led forms of accountability and claimed political space between elections. The article adopts the United Nations Development Programme (2013) definition of social accountability, which states that social accountability provides a principle of a vibrant, dynamic, and accountable relationship between governments and citizens to ensure equitable development.

3. Theoretical Perspectives

To ensure the effectiveness of the social accountability mechanisms, the study adopted the organizational learning theory and institutional theory.

3.1. Organizational Learning Theory

The research employed the organization learning theory that became popular in the 1950s when there was a dispute between behaviorists and economists. Before the end of the Second World War, the orientation of economic models to private organizations was developed by researchers that subscribed to a behaviorist perspective. Prominent behaviorists March, Simon, and Cyert attacked the classical economic theory of the firm because they argued that the models were overly simplistic and contradicted empirical evidence. In Africa, organizational learning gained prominence following the need for both private and public organizations to enhance the performance of organizations through learning or adopting new ways of doing things.

Daft and Huber (1987) assert that organizational

learning theory has interpretive and systemic-structural dimensions. Interpretive dimensions provide a meaning apportioned to data, whereas systemic-structural perspectives involve an organization's systems and structures of decision-making that disseminate information. Organizational learning was regarded as the capacity (or process) within an organization to maintain or enhance performance based on experience (Dibella et al., 1996). In their study, Chiva et al. (2014) refer to organizational learning as "the process through which organizations change or modify their mental models, rules, processes or knowledge, maintaining or improving their performance." Cheng et al. (2014) submit that as a management task, organizational learning is a process that includes controlling and planning to improve organizational performance. Therefore, organizational learning is based on the idea of the experience of an individual and of a collective (Holmqvist, 2003). Nonetheless, this raises questions on whether an organization can be deemed intelligent or superior to an individual.

Secondly, the organizational learning theory assumes that organizational learning produces change. This is where the demand for social accountability is derived from, as public officials must learn new things to enhance change in the way they deliver services to communities. Individually or collectively, public officials need to acquire skills to enhance social accountability, which is critical in service delivery. The organizational learning theory provides a theoretical gap that can be explored to understand why public officials are accountable in public service delivery. This theory has been widely adopted in organizational policymaking and administration in public sector organizations, as it socially offers valuable insights into how organizations act and change. As a multi-disciplinary theory with contributions from psychology, sociology, political science, social anthropology, economics, and public management, the researchers deemed it suitable to emphasize the significance of upholding social accountability in public service delivery.

Furthermore, through learning, municipal officials can become innovative and introduce new ideas, models, and concepts that can enhance their capacity to render public goods and services effectively. In this regard, Tshwane is assumed an organization characterized by a learning culture, tolerant towards errors and risks, open and receptive towards different opinions and alternative ways of doing things (Bovens et al., 2008). Therefore, implementing social accountability mechanisms can help Tshwane encourage and promote learning in pursuit of continuous improvement in public governance and management.

3.2. Institutional Theory

To understand how municipalities can improve public service delivery through effective institutional setups, the researchers employed the institutional theory

(IT), as it informs how institutions can interact with their surroundings. Several studies (DiMaggio & Powell, 2000; Tolbert & Zucker, 1996) discussed IT in line with three main concepts. As described by DiMaggio and Powell (2000), these include the isomorphic process, where coercive, mimetic, and normative mechanisms are expected to influence organizations to enhance change. The coercive isomorphism regards organizational change as being birthed by political decisions made by authorities. In public administration, government departments are often bound to implement new regulations, rules, and protocols that foresee change. The aim of IT, in this case, is to address deeper and more resilient aspects of social structure. The mimetic isomorphism informs about environmental uncertainties and setting ambiguous goals by copying from other organizations. Normative isomorphism involves organizations and professions seeking change due to peer pressure.

Furthermore, individuals would accept and follow social norms unquestioningly based on their interests, without any critical evaluation or pushback (Tolbert & Zucker, 1996). The IT was fundamental in this study as it helped understand the way public institutions such as Tshwane operate in service delivery. As a complement to the organizational learning theory, the IT advocates for implementing new reforms within the learning organization. This is crucial as the City of Tshwane serves many communities; therefore, implementing innovative mechanisms for social accountability is crucial. Citizens need to be kept abreast of how their money is being used. Therefore, politicians and officials are required to make a decision that ensures services are rendered to communities in a smart and accountable manner. To fit the IT and organizational learning theories in the study, the researchers discussed the three social accountability mechanisms below to establish how municipalities can use them in exercising accountability to the citizens they serve.

The examination of theoretical constructs underpinning the organizational learning theory led to the discussion on the three social accountability mechanisms used to uphold social accountability by municipal leaders to the communities they serve. These include the IDP, local government elections, and citizen scorecards.

3.3. Integrated Development Planning

In exercising social accountability, public officials in South Africa use the Integrated Development Planning (IDP) at the local sphere of government (Dlamini & Reddy, 2018). The IDP reflects on the public priorities in a municipal budget. Communities submit their needs (transport, health, economic development, infrastructure development) in the IDP, and these are then aligned to the municipal budget. The World Bank once piloted a study in the City of Tshwane in 2006 to assess the effectiveness of IDP as a social accountability mechanism. This was after the year 2000 when a wall-to-wall demarcation of municipalities formerly

demarcated as white and black areas across the country was done. Policymakers used the IDP to produce citizen preferences and feedback, which, together with participatory budgeting, clearly fitted into long and short routes to accountability (Asha & Makalela, 2020; World Bank, 2011). The IDP consultations in South Africa were viewed as an opportunity to lay service delivery grievances. The consultations also influenced service provider behavior, which is the short route to accountability.

Although IDP is a powerful tool to improve municipal accountability and service delivery, it has several weaknesses as a social accountability mechanism. To begin with, IDPs are five-year strategic visions with a concrete mechanism to influence annual budgeting and priority setting. United Nations Development Programme (2013) argues that although citizen participation in IDP is mandatory, such involvement is very limited. This has been further elucidated by a study conducted in Tshwane, which reflected that only 17% of residents in selected townships had come across IDP (World Bank, 2011). Although the IDP allows consultation mechanisms, citizens' voice is not actively emphatic due to limited participation, which reduces the accountability of officials.

3.4. Local Government Elections

Globally, local government elections are regarded as crucial in electing public servants that will serve the people's interests (Sidimba, 2021). In South Africa, local government elections are held every five years, and municipal councilors are elected to positions of authority to serve the people in various communities for five years. Elections in South Africa are used by citizens as a social accountability mechanism to demand services from those selected to power (Maphunye, 2010). Despite elections' being useful social accountability initiatives, they are often not sufficient to form accountability to promote citizen engagement. This is because elections are influential in holding elected officials accountable but not appointed government officials (Claasen & Alpin-Lardies, 2010). This poses serious questions as to "Who holds officials accountable?" and "How can they be held accountable?" Acosta et al. (2013) argue that individual office-bearers may not be held accountable through elections. Many voters perceive their votes more as seeking the best candidate to represent them during elections and less about office bearers' accountability. In most cases, politicians are voted into power by a certain segment of voters, which poses a threat of politicians indulging in political patronage or corruption to reward loyal 'comrades' for a well-done job. This harms social accountability since such elected officials can only account to their peers instead of the constituency.

The 2016 local government elections in South Africa saw three metropolitan cities in Gauteng converge to form coalition governments, as none of the political parties received enough votes to rule. Therefore, the

City of Tshwane, Ekurhuleni Metropolis, including the City of Johannesburg, formed a coalition in 2016, where the Democratic Alliance (DA) and Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) agreed to coalition government in the City of Tshwane headed by the DA (Mokgosi et al., 2017). As noted by Madumo (2015), the role of local government is to ensure community service delivery and improved standard of living of people in the jurisdiction where the municipalities reign. Nkomo (2017) reiterates that local government elections are fundamental as citizens obtain the opportunity to elect the officials they wish to serve their interests in public service delivery. However, citizens become disappointed in some cases as elected councilors often fail to rise to the occasion, with many corruption cases affecting the capacity to deliver services. With coalition governments being formed in 2016, excuses of poor coordination and cooperation among political parties were evident as protests engulfed the City of Tshwane over declining service provision. Upholding social accountability was a challenge for Tshwane in 2016-2017. The political landscape was marred by political interference and a series of forensic investigations, which derailed the vision of smart service delivery. Like in any other African country, local elections have been regarded as crucial in addressing the needs of the people, although change often fails to come as elected officials may decide to enrich themselves at the expense of the poor (Booyesen, 2014). Therefore, the effectiveness of elections in holding public officials accountable in the execution of public duties in service delivery is questionable.

3.5. Community Scorecards

As one of the social accountability mechanisms that citizens can use, community or citizen scorecards involve citizen participation in monitoring and evaluating priority services using indicators that citizens themselves have developed (Tirivanhu, 2020). Community scorecards seek accountability regarding the relevance, accessibility, and quality of public goods and services. In this sense, therefore, public opinion polls, public hearings, and citizen report cards are often used to solicit citizen feedback, which can be communicated and presented to government officials as a way of demanding accountability and lobbying for transformation. In social accountability, community scorecards can bridge the transparency gap by allowing users and service providers to autonomously evaluate public services and then collaborate to share their findings, discuss problems and seek solutions. The United Nations Development Programme (2013) submits that early research reflected that community scorecards could produce important operational results if implemented correctly. Institutional capacities and behavioral transformation can be witnessed in the public service, with officials taking a leading role in effective service delivery.

4. Materials and Methods

The article employed a mixed-method approach to collect data in the City of Tshwane in Gauteng Province of South Africa. Five communities were selected where the researchers administered a questionnaire survey and interviewed the selected participants. The paper triangulated various data collection techniques, including questionnaire surveys, interviews, and document analysis. The official documents analyzed include the City of Tshwane Annual Reports (2017/18), the Auditor-General of South Africa Report (2018), and peer-reviewed journal articles. The study employed a systematic sampling technique to choose participants who responded to questionnaire surveys from selected communities within the City of Tshwane. The sample consisted of participants aged between 18 and 65 and from all racial groups. The purposive sampling technique was used to identify 20 participants from the selected five departments within the City of Tshwane. These 20 participants were interviewed based on their knowledge of social accountability mechanisms and their use in service delivery.

A questionnaire survey was designed to examine the effectiveness of three social accountability mechanisms, IDP, local government elections, and citizen scorecards, used by citizens to demand service delivery from the City of Tshwane. The data collection instruments were a five-step Likert scale (1 - not effective at all, 2 - moderately effective, 3 - effective, 4 - moderately effective, and 5 - very effective), where respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement/satisfaction on the use of social accountability mechanisms. The Cronbach's coefficient was 0.70. The questionnaire contained open- and closed-ended questions, where respondents could express themselves regarding social accountability mechanisms and how citizens used them to demand accountability from officials for service delivery. The researchers interviewed 20 participants from five departments in Tshwane. They were public officials holding senior positions and having accountability authority. The entire data collection process took a month to complete.

The data analysis procedures for quantitative data were done using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Windows version 21 based on the responses from various respondents. Descriptive statistics were used to explain the basic characteristics of the data in the research. Frequency distribution, standard deviation, mean, median, and mode scores were the descriptive statistics used in this study. Qualitative data from interviews were transcribed verbatim and presented in themes following study objectives. Permission to conduct the study was granted by the North-West University. Gatekeepers' permission was granted by the Deputy City Manager of the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality.

5. Results and Discussion

This section provides a concurrent discussion of the

quantitative and qualitative findings of the study.

5.1. Integrated Development Planning and Social Accountability

In South Africa, IDP is being used by local municipalities as the main social accountability tool to account for service delivery actions. Citizens are required to participate and submit their input on the types of goods and services they want to be rendered to their communities. However, public participation in IDP processes is a challenge that degenerates into a lack of trust between communities and local municipalities. Figure 1 below shows the varied responses of citizens on whether they understood or believed an IDP was an effective tool that they could use to demand accountability from the City of Tshwane.

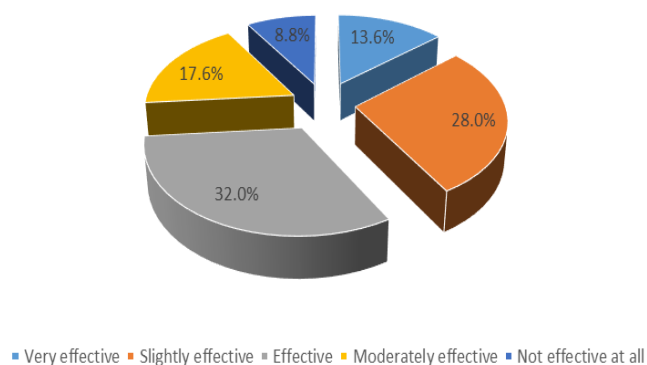


Figure 1. IDP and social accountability

Figure 1 indicates that only 13.6% of the respondents who took part in the survey believed that the IDP is very effective as a social accountability tool when used to demand service delivery. Some 28% felt that the IDP was slightly effective as a social accountability mechanism. The results further show that 32% of the respondents believed IDP was an effective mechanism for holding officials accountable. In comparison, 17.6% stated that an IDP was moderately effective as a mechanism for demanding social accountability. However, 8.8% disagreed that an IDP was an effective social accountability mechanism. The findings above reflect that many citizens believe that an IDP is the most viable strategy for holding officials accountable in public service delivery.

The municipal officials were asked whether they regarded an IDP as an effective tool in exercising social accountability in communities. Most participants admitted that the IDP was being used as a social accountability tool to respond to citizens' service delivery demands. However, the participants felt that some communities did not understand IDP's purpose, although it has long been implemented in municipalities to promote citizen participation over the years. Owing to limited citizen participation in IDP, one official advised that:

One must understand the history of the community, for instance, informal settlements. Obtaining such knowledge enables us to understand the demands of these people based on their economic status and how the settlements were established. As a municipality, we

provide those services following the Constitution provisions. There are backlogs in service delivery as some socio-economic issues were created by the former apartheid spatial planning and have not been rectified. We invite the community to participate in IDPs, but few come, which hinders service delivery, especially in informal settlements.

Another official added: "Some of the issues related to housing can be delivered by the provincial mandate. As a local government, we have restricted areas, as mandated by legislation at the local government level. For instance, electricity challenges in Marabastad - we cannot account in terms of that. It is the responsibility of the national department, so the level of social accountability is somewhat limited, depending on the resources and governing legal frameworks."

Commenting on the effectiveness of IDP, another participant further revealed that the Integrated Development Planning was the main tool that had citizens' input and was being used to hold officials accountable.

The IDP official said: "As part of exercising social accountability, we facilitate a process for planning purposes, and it cuts across all sectors in societies. In service delivery, communities are required to participate in planning, where people are allowed to air their views on the services they require, which will be incorporated into IDP."

The above assertions show that IDP is one of the social accountability mechanisms public officials use to account to citizens for service delivery. The IDP provides citizens with the opportunity to openly discuss and direct the municipality to provide services that are important to their communities. Furthermore, participatory budgeting, which is embedded in the whole IDP process, is used as a social accountability mechanism by which the local authority accounts for citizens. As a learning organization, Tshwane continuously uses the IDP, which allows citizens to input their demands and what they expect to be rendered to their communities. Therefore, the study argues that stakeholders and accountability in service delivery make an organization successful, as enshrined in the organizational learning theory.

5.2. Local Government Election: A 'Beacon' of Hope in Social Accountability

In many African states, elections have been used as a form of both political and social accountability. Maphunye (2010) argues that elections that involve voting using ballots are nothing but the selection of representatives into power. The hope of citizens through elections is to hold the selected individuals accountable for service delivery, although this is not often the case.

The exclusion of some community groups can be experienced if the state is not held accountable. However, in countries such as South Africa, where democracy is championed by interest groups, pressure groups, and other CSOs, elections can bring meaningful change, although they are sometimes diluted by the

selfish interests of wealthy people who can sponsor a candidate in anticipation of future exploitations (Sebudubudu & Botlhomilwe, 2010). Elections require huge financial and human labor, where accountability and transparency are exercised when voting a candidate into power. However, such a huge expenditure does not translate into improved service delivery and social accountability since citizens are often ignored when they demand services.

Maphunye (2016) argues that elections are linked to Rousseau's social contract, in which citizens undertake a collective role to hold the state accountable. In many African countries, elections appear to have lost their significance, as they are marred by violence, rigging, and many irregularities. Several studies validate the above notion and argue that electoral integrity in Africa has been compromised because free and fair elections are a mere talk. They are practically abused and manipulated by governments and individuals. The graph below presents the views of citizens of Tshwane on the use of local government elections as a social accountability mechanism to hold municipal officials accountable.

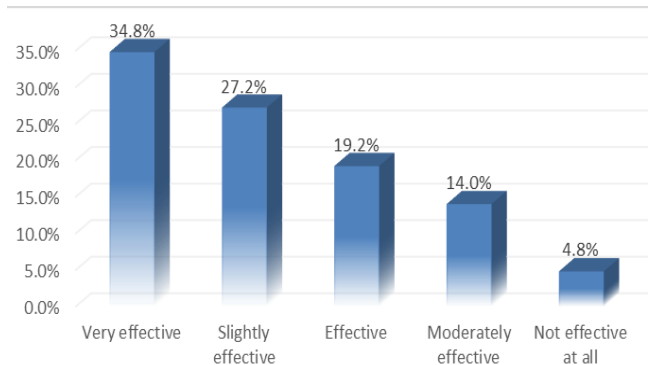


Figure 2. Local government elections and social accountability

Figure 2 shows that 34.8% of the respondents in this study believed that elections are very effective tools for holding public officials accountable for service delivery, 27.2% of the respondents believed that elections are slightly effective. In comparison, 19.2% felt that elections are effective social accountability tools. Furthermore, 14% believed that elections are moderately effective, whereas 4.8% believed that elections are ineffective. Based on this figure, most citizens believed local government elections are effective in demanding accountability from the municipality. This is probably because they elected their person into office; hence, they can hold the individual accountable in service delivery matters.

The qualitative findings corroborate the quantitative findings, as they have shown that elections could be used as effective mechanisms for social accountability, although they have their limitations. Commenting on the effectiveness of local government elections, one key informant affirmed: "Elections are a better way of bringing elected officials to account for their actions, although sometimes, the politics affects their capacity to be accountable. In some circumstances, if any elected official belongs to a powerful party, he/she can be

shielded from exercising social accountability because there will be corrupt tendencies behind the issues. Politics is playing a great deal in discouraging social accountability in our municipality; hence, dissatisfied citizens may sometimes not get answers to their service delivery demands.”

Although elections can bring meaningful citizen participation, political 'comradeship,' as the findings revealed, discourages social accountability as corrupt individuals often escape accountability for fear of exposing their ringleaders or political parties. These assertions are corroborated by a study conducted by Khale and Worku (2013) on factors affecting municipal service in Gauteng and North West Municipalities in South Africa. Their study revealed that dissatisfied citizens often did not participate in elections as a move to express their disgruntlement on municipal conduct. The study findings by Kanyane et al. (2020) correspond with those mentioned above, as theirs also indicate that elections are used as a social accountability mechanism. However, citizens in communities where service delivery is poor do not actively participate in elections, as they believe that they do not bring any positive change.

While other citizens believed that local government elections could increase social accountability, the majority disregarded local elections, as mistrust remains evident since elected officials have, over the years, abused power through indulging in corruption and mismanagement, which impede service delivery to the community. Nonetheless, Maphunye (2016) holds a distinct view. He perceives this local government election as an opportunity for citizens to participate and select the person they want to serve their interest in improving social accountability. The citizen's disgruntlement, in this case, may have been triggered by past experiences where service delivery protests occurred throughout the City of Tshwane in 2013 and 2016 due to service delivery backlogs. Therefore, local government elections can be a participatory mechanism of electing councilors into power, although their accountability depends on how they respond to citizens' demands for basic services. The paper argues that local government elections, therefore, reflect a gloomy picture as social accountability mechanisms depend on the willpower and commitment of public officials to be held accountable for their actions.

5.3. Community Scorecards and Social Accountability

The use of citizen scorecards as social accountability mechanism has been common in developed countries. In contrast, it has been low in developing countries due to a lack of adequate funding to conduct such an exercise (World Bank, 2014). The graph below presents citizens' views on whether a community scorecard can be used in Tshwane effectively to hold public officials accountable.

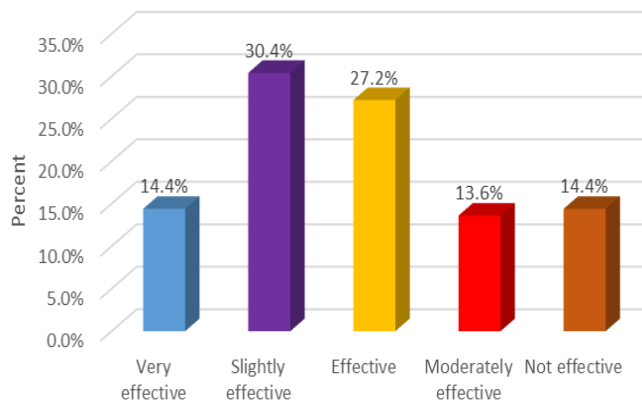


Figure 3. Effectiveness of scorecards in social accountability

Figure 3 shows that 14.4% of the respondents agreed that community scorecards were very effective. In comparison, 30.4% stated that they were slightly effective, while 27.2% agreed that they effectively held municipal officials accountable for service delivery. Furthermore, 13.6% of the respondents believed that community scorecards were moderately effective, and 14.4% stated that community scorecards were not as effective as social accountability mechanisms. The highest percentage, 30.4%, shows that community scorecards have a minimal effect in demanding accountability from service providers. This may be due to citizens' limited knowledge regarding community scorecards, which may adversely affect their participation.

Qualitative findings indicated that community scorecards have a limited effect in holding public officials accountable for their actions in service delivery. This is supported by a study conducted by Tirivanhu (2020), which revealed that the effectiveness of social accountability mechanisms on the demand side is often misleading, as they need cooperation between the supply side at various levels of government. These findings corroborate the institutional theory, as it advocates for various units within an institution to work together to produce an output. The findings further point out that scorecards, for instance, demand effective interactions between citizens, frontline service providers, and program managers. However, in a learning organization, public officials may require an incentive to encourage them to become innovative and eager to learn new ways of delivering services. In that sense, therefore, if citizens are educated on the benefits of using scorecards, their eagerness to demand social accountability may improve. However, this depends on the responsiveness of service providers.

6. Conclusion

This article sought to examine the effectiveness of three social accountability mechanisms, IDP, local government elections, and citizen scorecards, in enhancing public service delivery. The findings of this study may be beneficial to the planning and institutional management of the City of Tshwane, as they provide

alternative avenues on how municipal officials can uphold social accountability to the citizens they serve. The organizational learning theory was used, and it provided insight into how public institutions must be persistently innovative, accountable, and responsive to the needs of the citizens. The institutional theory was also employed to express how institutions such as municipalities must uphold rules and regulations and ensure that each department interacts with another towards effective public service delivery. The analyses of findings revealed that citizen participation in social accountability is meant to hold public officials accountable in service delivery. This was evidenced in citizen participation in local government elections, where citizens can select municipal councilors to represent their needs. The implementation of the citizen scorecard was found to be slightly effective in demanding accountability from municipal officials. However, the use of IDP has proven so far to be the best social accountability mechanism for holding municipal officials and political office bearers accountable for service delivery in the City of Tshwane. In this study, the Institutional Theory helped understand the complexity of various municipal departments and how they should all coordinate to ensure that citizens receive the services they need to facilitate their daily lives. The findings further revealed that citizens in the case study area are increasingly demanding social accountability, and they often resort to violent public protests to express their grievances. The use of the three social accountability mechanisms in communities failed to achieve the intended outcome of improving community service delivery. Furthermore, these mechanisms still have a long way to being effective. A popular belief is that politicians and officials rarely account for their actions, which weakens social accountability mechanisms. Although IDP forums are conducted annually, their effectiveness in upholding accountability is questionable since the commitment and willpower of public officials are the keys to enhancing service delivery.

7. Limitations and Further Study

The study focused on only three social accountability mechanisms to see how citizens use them to demand accountability. Therefore, future social accountability research should investigate the factors affecting citizen engagement in state institutions' work. This will assist in establishing strong citizen movements that will help hold local municipalities accountable to the communities they serve through social accountability.

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Authors' Contributions

The first author conceptualized the paper, gathered and presented the data. The second author focused on the discussion and conclusion sections, overall quality assurance, and article editing.

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