



Youth Engagement in Democratic Process and Peace Building in Tanzania: A Study of the 2020 General Elections in Dodoma City

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Abstract

Various factors including the global community, regional bodies and national leaders have expressed their voices to demand engagement of all segments of the society, youth in particular in political processes, elections in particular which is substantial for democracy and Peace Building. Chapter 4, Article 4 of the African Union Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance of 2007 (AU, 2007) and Chapter 17, Article 11(1) of the African Youth Charter of 2006 both demands for state parties to ensure equal access for young men and young women to participate in decision – making through fulfilling civic duties of which election is core for peace building. This paper investigated the rationale as to why despite the call for youth to engage in political and democratic election to enhance Peace, still during elections particularly on voting in Tanzania, youth turnout is uncertain. This paper used both secondary and primary information. It has observed that, youth participate in election campaigns, but their motivation in voting for Peace Building is uncertain due to various reasons including lack of trust to body responsible for election management (NEC), lack of political awareness, disengagement of youth from politics of chaos and violence during election times. The article recommends reform to the National Election committee and thorough capacity building on youth to internalize and exercise their civic rights including voting for the health of Democracy, consequently peace Building.

Keywords: Youth; Election; Democracy; and Peace Building

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Introduction

Youth are a sundry category of society who can transform but more important stand for above 50% of the global inhabitants and thus have the potential to outstandingly contribute in societal development broadly and specifically in peace Building. Peace building via democratic enhancement by youth participation in the electoral process is essential for suitable development. It is because Youth are potential to education and are largely flexible than any other individuals to the new chances offered by globalization (UNESCO, 20021). According to UNDP youth are a population ages 15–24, but also to encompass people ranging from ages 25–30 (and even outside through age 35), based on contextual realities and regional and national youth policy directives (UNDP, 2022). In a healthy nation a young age is involved comprehensively to tape their thoughts, knowledge, skills, and perceptions during programmatic, policy, and institutional decision-making arrangements so as to best Appraise outcomes. It is a progression that necessitates young person's to be intricate in all stages and phases of program, policy, campaign, and improvement edge, comprising all phases of design, execution, and assessment; this is crucial particularly of those programs that straight mark them survives (Women Deliver, 2015). Largely, youth engagement can be described as the idea of involving young people in meaningful ways in the essential tasks and progressions of the public. Youth can be a resourceful power, a vigorous source of novelties, and have certainly, in antiquity, partaken, added, and even triggered imperative alterations in political systems, power-sharing arrangements, governance, economic opportunities and peace, therefore a necessity to engage.

Youth should variedly be engaged as they are a big category of people amongst the population, conceivably if resourcefully used could be transformative proxies for Peace Building and surety around the world. The continent of Africa for example is a family to more than 200 million youth of which two out of three inhabitants are beneath 25 years 'age, and 44% of its people is below the age of 15. In Asia and Pacific areas, youth comprise of 19% of the entire inhabitants (UN-Habitat and UNDESA, 2018 and FANRPAN, 2019). The eminence of young is strong in the civic scuffles that produced amiable freedom in nations like Ghana, Senegal and Tanzania. It was also evident of the confrontational armed liberty struggles that brought freedom to Angola, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau, Zimbabwe and Namibia. Such arrangement to liberate humanities



in Africa by youth implicitly consolidated peace and security and ground for independence of participation, democracy and rule of law which are imperative for sustainable peace and development.

Amongst prominent youth in Africa is the late Julius K. Nyerere who was the first President of Tanzania (the then Tanganyika), amalgamated the political career at the age of 31 as he was born in 1922 and joined Tanganyika African Union in 1953 which was later converted to Tanganyika African National Union of which he led the liberation of the country as the first Prime Minister (Britain Tanzania Society, 1985 and Holland, 2009). It is true the ending of apartheid in South Africa was highly contributed by visionary youth in the respective country. It was in June 16, 1976, an estimated 3,000-10,000 students paraded to object the apartheid régime and pushed to institute Afrikaans be an obligatory language of tutoring in public education, together with English. The fierce police reaction to this nonviolent demonstration led to an extensive rebellion against the government and uncovered the cruelty of the apartheid regime in global society. These occasions implanted new zeal in the freedom movement and positioned youth to play a focal role in termination of discrimination apartheid regime (Lekalake, 2015). Taking into consideration of these historical occasions young population have proved their capacity and potential who can also intervene in global problems such as conflict and poverty for sustainable develop. Youth have contributed novel thoughts and been active in recognizing answers to countless challenges, and have also shown their capability to build connections of peaceful negotiation across cultures for peace sustainability. Youth therefore are critical transformative agent for social, political and economic development including peace Building in Tanzania and elsewhere in the world.

Peace Building is a complex, long-term process of creating the necessary condition for sustainable peace, it works by addressing the deep rooted, structural and institutional causes of violent conflict in a comprehensive manner, it builds foundations of peace, it entails strengthening the rule of law, democratic development via electoral assistance, creation of transparent national election Commission and fight of corruption (The Brahmi Report, 2000). In this case proper election is a maturity democratic instituted regime culminates into Peace



Building. Therefore, effective engagement of youth in the democratic process is positive and indeed inevitable for Peace Building in any nation.

Political Election as a democratic procedure for peace building encompasses numeral participant who perform substantial roles in the entire process. Amongst them comprise but not limited to electorates, government, election observers, political parties, the elections management body, the civil society and the media in which youth are part of course, for elections to be comprehensive, fair and gain legality and build peace in a society, all pieces of the society need to be involved from the initial stage to the last stage of the process. This is cemented by the argument of Lijphart (1997) and Verba *et al.* (1995) who contends that citizen's including youth political participation is the heart of democracy, peace build and stability. The involvement of youth in election particularly voting stage is conceived uncertain while internationally youth are seen as agents of transformative development and catalyst of peace and security in the world. United Nations Development Programs report has portrayed the deteriorating tendency of voting to youth internationally as follows; In Latin America, persons fewer than 30 participate less than those over 30 in all presidential elections on the continent. In Asia, youth turnout rate in the area is mostly 15%-30% lower than that of persons older than 35. In Europe, 60% of entitled voters between 18 and 24 years old chose not to vote in their country's most recent national election (UNDP, 2017 and Norman, 2020).

Other Reports the IDEA (2019), youth have a tendency of not putting consideration on democratic process election in particular and such affects peace building endeavors. According to EACEA (2013) youth are less rigorous in the voting stages, they are also nor adequately represented in election related activities and electoral managerial functions. EACEA (2013) has also articulated on the deterioration of voter turnout and desisting from voting for youth at election time. The study steered by Afro barometer in 2020, also shows low political rendezvous mainly voting amongst youth in African countries. In The United Republic of Tanzania, the youth comprises the biggest percentage of the population which is 61% (Tanzania Census Report, 2022). For that basis, one would expect them to be in front in political processes, elections in particular of which is a foundation for peace building through democratic process. However, despite their larger numbers, the experience shows that the level of their engagement



in elections (voting in particular) is very low compared to elders (Kulaba, 2015). This trend is not healthier for democratic maturity, peace building and the prosperity of the nation at large taking into account that youth are a transformative agent. This paper therefore aims at unveiling the rationale for low youth turnout during elections in Tanzania despite the strategic importance of election in Peace Building Process through enchantment of democracy.

Materials and Methods

The materials used in this paper are both secondary and primary. The qualitative analysis of the articles, books, newspapers and journal on similar debates forms the bases for a key argument in this article. The primary data reinforced qualitative information obtained in scholarly documentations on the youth voting patterns in Tanzania and drives behind. In this case it is a mixed methodology that intended to capture the whole information on the voting motives of youth in the country.

Theoretical and Empirical debate

Theoretical Review:

Rational choice model draws on the work of Downs (1957) arguing that an individual's choice to participate will result from the weighing up the benefits of an actions or activity in relation to the costs, if the costs are too great, or the benefits too few, then they are less likely to participate. With regard to youth turnout, it is anchored on the fact that can voting brings transformations in the democratic process for peace building. If voting is unlikely to achieve anything or result in any benefits to youth voter such as mentioned peace building, then they can't vote. The voter is attracted, from the rational choice theory, in engaging with decision on 'utility' and hence interested to understand the party with best policies to benefit them. Voters including youth also measure the costs related with voting; the time desirable to vote and to get the evidence to sort a knowledgeable decision (Holland & Martin, 2015) The main assumption of the rational choice model theory is that voters are always rational. They normally calculate the advantages and disadvantages of their actions (voting). If the benefits seem to be little, voters normally abstain from voting while if the benefits are likely to be more positive, voters normally tend to turn for



voting. The strength of the theory is that through analysis, voters are in better position to make choices regarding their decision on voting. Through such analysis, the possibility of getting best leaders for sustained peace in a democratic election is very high. However, as a criticism of a theory, with wrong analysis (monetary rather than governance and peace building benefits), voters may end with short term benefits and ruins the entire aim of long term contribution to peace building and produce future potentials for conflicts rather than peace.

The general incentives model is another theory towards the study that addresses the paradox of voting by incorporating ideas about why rational actors might engage in collective action. The theory is a synthesis of rational choice and psychological accounts of voter turnout (Seyd and Whitely, 1992; Whitely and Seyd, 2002 and Clarke *et al.*, 2004). The core idea is that individuals need incentives and cues in order to vote. It supplements rational choice accounts of political behavior by arguing that individuals take into account a wide range of incentives when they are considering when to vote and who to vote for rather than simply considering the individual incentives discussed above. The incentives in this decision are individual, group, system and expressive benefits. Group benefits are not just those that flow to one's family but to people who are viewed as similar to oneself or those in need of help. System benefits are benefits that accrue to a political system when citizens vote such as reinforced governance and peace building. The recognition that a healthy democracy for governance is a pillar for Peace Building requires citizen involvement in voting. Expressive benefit is the sense of satisfaction that people receive when they demonstrate their support for political actors, institutions or processes. Social norms are also included in the model. These are parts of the sociopolitical and governance context in which people make choices about whether to vote, or not to vote (Clarke *et al.*, 2004). From the perspective of this theory, it becomes obvious that turnout in elections is influenced by a number of factors including the individual incentives, rationality among voters and the value of a vote to be casted as whether it will result into positive (such as governance and peace building) impact or not. This is relevant to the general findings of the study whereas it has evidenced that voters (youth in particular) are influenced by number of incentives for them to vote including monetary as well as influence from relatives and friends (both long term and



short term). However, as a matter of a weakness of a theory, the factors influencing low turnout in elections are not the same as those envisaged in the study. The theory has focused much on rationality of voters as a factor for electoral turnout while the results of the study has indicated influence from relatives and money being incentives for electoral turnout.

The results of the survey indicate that youth normally vote in order to secure jobs and other material inducements and not the long term benefits such governance and peace building. According to their opinions, what matters most when it comes to job is not merit and qualifications; rather it is about connections and finding favor with politicians and hence voting counts. Registration and voting has therefore largely become a transactional action linked into a chain of being noticed, finding favor and being rewarded with a job not for democratic right which enhances sustainability of peace, governance and development. In this regard, it has therefore indicated that the South African youth vote even if they are not interested with politics and policies (Booyesen, 2015, Wiese, 2011 and Scott, 2012). Voting hoping for change and voting out of indebtedness for sacrifice are the other reasons for South African youth to turnout for voting. Most of young voters believe that things cannot change by themselves, rather its vote that can bring changes. On other hand, most of youth in South Africa feel indebted over the liberation that African National Congress has brought in the country where as the party fought fiercely to end apartheid regime in the country in 1994. The youth feel indebted to the party and therefore they have a feeling that if they will not vote, another party will come into power with unknown policies (ibid). On other hand, IFES conducted a study in Kosovo in 2016 to identify reasons for youth to vote or not voting in elections. The study used the data of the past four elections in Kosovo including the 2009 local elections, 2010 general elections, 2013 local elections and 2014 general elections whereas the ten focus group were established to explore reasons behind voting or not voting. The study was conducted in various municipalities of Kosovo and the selected sample aged 19 to 29 years of age. In response to reasons for voting, the following were the major arguments; the most common response among the focus group participants was that voting is the way to make changes in politics and governance. In Vushtrri municipal, most participants stated they had voted in order to bring changes in politics, “vote for someone who is new in politics”, “see new political entities rise to power”, “remove the



governing parties from their current positions”, and “punish the political entities”. Participants widely believed that voting is a way to change the ruling party. Other voters associated voting to changes in areas other than politics noting “changes in the governance for education, health, water and other sectors to ensure peace (IFES, 2016).

On the other side, there were very frequent mentions of personal gain as a motivator for voting. Participants declared that they vote or would be more motivated to vote if they receive a direct benefit in return, mainly related to employment opportunities. According to the report, participants in the Gjilan municipal group stated employment opportunities were the main reasons why they voted in the 2014 general elections, which were echoed in other focus groups, such as in North Mitrovica where a man in the group claimed to have voted in 2014 general elections “for reasons of employment”. A man in the Gjilan group stated he would vote for a candidate he knows personally so that he could obtain a direct profit from voting. Generally, participants expressed a “what is it for me” attitude with regard to voting. The excitement of voting for the first time was the other reason as to why youth voted in elections. According to a report, many respondents stated that it was their first time voting, as their reason for voting in the 2015 general election. Similarly, another respondent was excited to vote for the first time, and noted “it made him feel more mature”. Pressure from outside also was seen to be among the reasons for youth turnout. Youth claimed of being intimidated and pressured by political parties, family and employers as well for the sake of retaining their jobs especially those working to private companies (ibid). It is therefore imperative to annex the link of voting with governance and peace building of which are alienated motivation amongst youth for democratic election process.



Results and Discussions

Youth engagement in electoral campaign

The research conducted in four selected wards of Nkuhungu, Zuzu, Mtumba and Makole in central Tanzania which indicated that, the percentage of youth who engaged in electoral campaigns in 2020 general elections in Dodoma City was 100%. The general conclusion drawn from such results is that, the extent of youth engagement in campaign rallies is very high.

Table 1. Youth engagement in electoral campaigns

Variables	Number of Respondents				Total	Percent
Have you ever engaged yourself in electoral campaigns?	Makole n=20	Nkuhungu n=20	Mtumba n=20	Zuzu n=20		
No	00	00	00		00	0.00
Yes	20	20	20	20	80	100.00

Source: Field Data, 2021

In one of the focus group discussions conducted at Chinangali village, Mtumba ward, on 2nd June 2021, participants had the following to comment on the 2020 general election;

“The 2020 general election was perceived to be a unique election, as opposition for long time was burn from political activities. Some had fled Tanzania as political Asylum in European countries. So we attended and followed closely the campaign rallies to understand what could happen in terms of campaigns, the ruling and opposition parties. Most of us attended just to see and get interactions with other colleague and enjoy the rallies by getting to know what was going on there. To be genuine our interest is just to attend the campaign rally but not sure if we shall vote”.

This view concurs with the observation by (Richmond and Mattes (2014) who argued that youth in South Africa are far less likely to vote in national elections; rather they are more likely to get involved in other campaign activities like attending rallies and to follow campaign.



Youth motivation to attend campaigns

The respondents who attended campaigns equivalent to 100%, were motivated by several factors during campaign times. Statistically, 17 respondents who are equivalent to 20.1% were motivated by party manifestos, 18 respondents equivalent to 21.1% had expectation of getting money from politicians once attended, 25 respondents equivalent to 34.4% were pressured by their friends or relatives to attend campaigns whereas 20 respondents equivalent to 24.4% attended campaigns to watch artist such as musicians and comedians as depicted in Table 02 below;

Table 02: Youth Motivation to attend Campaigns

Variables	Number of Respondents				Total	Percent
	Makole n=20	Nkuhungu n=20	Mtumba n=20	Zuzu n=20		
If the answer for the question number one (1) above is YES, what motivated you to attend the campaign?						
Listening to party manifestos	5	6	3	3	17	20.1
Expectation of getting money from politicians	6	6	4	2	18	21.1
Pressure from friends	7	7	6	5	25	34.4
Watching artists like musicians and comedians	5	5	5	5	20	24.4

Source: Field Data, 2021

In determining the motivations for youth to attend electoral campaign, it was revealed that, most of youth, 34.4% were influenced by pressure from friends, whereas 24.4% attended campaigns so as to watch artists like musicians and comedians as shown in Table 02 of the data presentation



chapter. Basing on such results, it can be concluded that most youth in Tanzania are not aware of their political rights, rather they are being influenced by other non-political motives to engage themselves in elections, such as being avenue for enforcing governance, peace and new strategies for development. The results are reinforced by the views of youth in one of the focus group discussion conducted at CBE *bodaboda* centre, Makole ward, adjacent to CBE on 15th May 2021, members commented the following;

“.... artists, mostly musicians, film artists and comedians formed part of the campaign teams in the 2020 general elections. Both the ruling party and to some magnitude the opposition parties used various artists as a means to attract more people to attend campaigns knowing that artists like Diamond, Roma Mkatoliki”, Wema Sepetu and many others have many followers, mostly youth and therefore in order to win their support, it was necessary for parties to include them in their campaign teams as entertainers. This in turn made campaign meetings to be filled up by many people, mostly youth, therefore it not about getting the best ideologies for best leadership rather to see artist...”

The observation is contrary with the Baseline Survey conducted in Kenya in 2015 on youth engagement in politics in the country as it was discovered that youth tend to participate willingly and actively in all spheres of politics, attending campaigns in particular. During election periods, youth tend to play significant roles into their parties such as mobilizing support from members, designing party slogans as well as collection of opinions on various issues that of important to the parties and candidates (Center for Multiparty Democracy Kenya, 2015). Furthermore, it is contrary to report of voting in South Africa, according to their opinions, what matters most when it comes to job is not merit and qualifications; rather it is about connections and finding favor with politicians and hence voting counts. Registration and voting has therefore largely become a transactional action linked into a chain of being noticed, finding favor and being rewarded with a job not for democratic right which enhances sustainability of peace, governance and development. In this regard, it has therefore indicated that the South African youth vote even if they are not interested with party politics and policies (Booyesen, 2015, Wiese, 2011 and Scott, 2012).

**Table 3. Drivers for youth turnout for voting**

Variables	Number of Respondents				Total Percent	
	Makole n=20	Nkuhungu n=20	Mtumba n=20	Zuzu n=20		
If the answer to question (1) is YES, what drove you to turnout for voting?						
Party manifesto	4	1	1	1	7	8.7
Exercising constitutional and democratic right	1	3	3	3	10	12.5
Influence from parents/guardians/friends	13	11	12	13	49	61.2
You obtained money from politicians	5	6	7	6	24	30

Source: Field Data, 2021

Respondents, equivalent to 61.2% were influenced by their friends or parents, whereas 24 respondents, equivalent to 30% went to vote as a payback to the material gifts they received. Such information is clearly illustrated in Table 3. The results of the findings as presented in Table 3 in the data presentation chapter indicates that, 61.2% of the interviewed youth pointed to the fact that the reason for their turn out in voting is influence by parents, guardians or friends. On other hand, it has envisaged that 30% of young voters were influenced by material inducement such as money from politicians as a result they turnout for voting. Other participants were influenced by party manifestos and turning to exercise their constitutional and democratic right, 8.7% and 12.5% respectively. Basing on such results, it can be concluded that, youth are not willing to participate by their own in voting without external influence from parents, guardians or friends, or without influence of money from politicians. These results concur with the views of participants in a focus group discussion held at Bochela Street in the



Mtaa Executive Office located near Mnadani Secondary school, Nkuhungu ward on 19th June 2021, who noted that;

“...elections period is the harvesting time for what they have planted to politicians, politicians like members of parliament are highly paid individuals and therefore they must return the money reaped in previous years back to us so as to be voted again, hence no long term target like pace building through democracy...”

The findings are in parallel with the view by IFES (2016) who in the context of Kosovo, youth are being intimidated and pressured to vote by their family members, political parties and employers as well so as to secure their jobs, especially those working in private companies. So the motive behind voting for them is material inducement. The same dimension appears in South Africa where according to Booysen (2015), Wiese (2011), and Scott (2012), voting among youth in a country is a transactional action in which youth vote in expectation of material benefit such as jobs, money and finding favor with politicians.

However, in the same country, some 12.5% of the youth are much concerned with the meaning and impact of their votes whereby they tend to vote so as to bring changes arguing that things cannot change by themselves rather their vote can bring changes. The changes in policy, governance, peace and development are core for them to vote. These results concur with the views of participants in a focus group discussion held at Kisasa Street in the Mtaa Executive Office located near Kisasa Secondary school, Makulu ward on 7th June 2021, who noted that

“Youth like adult motivation in voting in terms of prospective enhancement of governance and Peace Building is uncertain due to various reasons including lack of trust to body responsible for election management (NEC), lack of political awareness, disengagement of in voting due to the politics of chaos and violence during election times, thus voting is more driven by influence by relatives and money rather than the long term benefits of governance and peace building”.

This concurs with the view of South African Survey Report, (2020). The results of the survey indicate that youth normally vote in order to secure jobs and other material inducements. According to their opinions, what matters most when it comes to job is not merit and qualifications; rather it is about connections and finding favor with politicians and hence voting counts. Registration and voting has therefore largely become a transactional action linked into a



chain of being noticed, finding favor and being rewarded with a job not for democratic right which enhances sustainability of peace, governance and development. In this regard, it has therefore indicated that the South African youth vote even if they are not interested with politics and policies (Booyesen, 2015, Wiese, 2011 and Scott, 2012).

Conclusion

The study revealed that the turnout during campaign rally was high in the 2020 election in Tanzania. The reason was that, it was an opportunity for youth to Watch artists like musicians and comedians, monetary incentives, and pressure from parents. Therefore, nothing to do with building democracy for peace. The turnout for voting during the 2020 general election was nor at par with registered voters among youth and that they are not willing to turn up in future elections, the 2025 general election in particular. The main cause of their abstinence from voting is being attributed with among other factors, lack of trust to the authority which is responsible for management of elections in Tanzania, the National Election Commission (NEC), and lack of political awareness among youth as disbelief that the process could enhance democracy for peace, disengagement of youth from politics and chaos and violence in election times. Of which this is detrimental to governance and peace building in the Tanzania and elsewhere in the world.

Recommendations

The paper thus recommends that a national dialogue should be held to determine areas of reform to the National Elections Commissioner as currently alleged to be biased and pro the ruling party thus demotivating youth to participate in voting during election as they are pessimistic of the possibility of true democracy for strengthened governance and peace building. Youth education and awareness creation and capacity building on their civic rights particularly voting rights be enhanced as it is an important avenue for them as agent of changes to influence transformative policies for sustainable peace, security and development particularly in Tanzania and other countries in Africa.



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