

Perceptions Towards Participation in Local Developmental Programs Among Youths and Women. Evidence from the City of Gweru. Zimbabwe

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Abstract: The study confronted the poor participation of youths and women in local development activities and programs noted within the city of Gweru. It sought to establish factors influencing how youths and women perceive the concept of democratic participation in the local development programs. A survey was conducted, collecting questionnaire data from 90 purposively selected respondents from the city of Gweru. Through application of the Mann Whitney U and the Kruskal Wallis non-parametric tests, it was revealed that the responses obtained were not affected by demographic variables of age, gender, marital status or qualification of respondents, hence, the responses could be relied upon. The study further applied the Partial Least Squares models (PLS-PM) to examine relationships between the latent variables, using factor loadings and paths coefficients. It was therefore confirmed from the inner and outer models that perceptions of residents have a significant influence on their respective behaviour. The study established that residents in the city of Gweru were quite aware of the concept of democratic governance, participation and the associated benefits. However, a handful of barriers were noted as standing in the way of youths' and women's full participation in local development programs. Noted challenges include partisan politics, poor accountability and lack of support for democratic participation. Among other proposed remedies, the study recommends the need to improve relationships between councillors, council executive and residents, which goes a long way improving transparency, accountability, and stakeholder perception. This has a potential to positively influence residents' compliance behaviour, which comes with a multiplier effect on the local authority's revenue flows that can transform into improved service delivery.

Keywords: *Youth, Women, Participation, Local governance*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Demographic statistics in Africa and other developing regions reveal an increasing trend in the proportion of youths and women to total population (Musarurwa, 2018). It therefore tells a story that the corresponding representation and participation in regional governance and developmental programs expectedly be reflective of this trend. To the contrary, representation and participation levels are relatively low, yet women and the youths are faced with a myriad of challenges which are a direct reflection of socio-economic woes generally bedeviling the entire region and they manifest as poverty, oppression and poor health conditions (Anderson & Finch, 2017).

Government and civil society organisations are tirelessly advocating for improved youths and women participation. They employ various measures to engage them in community development programs and civic life, in a bid to intentionally connect them with vast avenues of opportunities to participate in the representation of their own interests. Women and youths engagement is aimed at availing a handful of benefits, including gaining information, skills, sense of control in decision making process, sense of empowerment, enhancement of self-esteem and improved civil efficacy among others (Checkoway, 2011; Blanchet-Cohen, Manolson, & Shaw, 2014). In general, civil engagement has long been known to play a preparatory role and for its contribution to democracy, leading to social justice (Checkoway & Aldana, 2013), which in turn is a lasting solution to majority of modern day community problems (Collins, Augsberger, Gecker, & Lusk, 2018).

Attention towards engagement of formerly marginalised community groups is increasingly gaining popularity in a number of countries. This recognition is being driven by a number of factors including multilateral developmental organisations advocacy. A clear example being the noted response to Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which called for attention towards the voice and perspectives of the youthful population. However, notable inadequate attention has been directed towards understanding and addressing the challenges hindering women and youth participation in local

developmental and governance programs in Zimbabwe. The rampant inadequate representation and participation of women and the youths in local democratic and developmental issues noted particularly in the city of Gweru has necessitated this study. It is meant to establish principal factors hindering women and youth participation in local development programs and attempting to come up with possible solutions thereto.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study applied two theoretical frameworks that seem to provide a deep insight into women and youth participation in public policy programs and processes. The study identifies these frameworks as the policy process framework and the social justice framework. These frameworks are further explained hereunder.

2.1. The policy process framework

Policy process models bring attention to different stages in the policy making process, from setting of the agenda to its implementation and evaluation, and providing a navigation guide through the policy development process (Birkland, 2011). A handful of civil society organisations and groups contribute significantly in buttressing the importance of participation, particularly during the critical stages of agenda setting and policy design. Literature notes with concern, the inadequacy of attention given to the youths as policy actors. Mainly because majority of young people under the age of 18 are considered minors and are not eligible to vote, and as such their interests are said to be represented by adults in the policy making process (Chan & Clayton, 2006). In the context of modern governance systems, particularly in the developing world, literature is replete with evidence that power is a central feature within the public governance matrix, it therefore plays a significant role in influencing policy, for that reason, questions lie on the means through which women and youths can be empowered; How best can youths and women be capacitated to influence policy? How best can they gain power and recognition within the grass roots political systems and structures? Gutierrez (1994) defines empowerment as “a process of increasing personal, interpersonal, or political power so that individuals, families and communities can take action to improve their life situations”. It therefore follows that; empowerment is necessitated by the availability of resources and knowledge of how to participate.

2.2. The social justice framework

Broadly defined, social justice involves paying attention to structural and systematic irregularities by means of assessing power relations and identifying the need for active engagement to address these inequalities (Reisch & Garvin, 2016). The framework advocates for the rights of women and youths within inherently unfair systems, and puts emphasis on the challenges of harnessing these marginalised groups' power in most institutionalised, both formal and informal, structures. Broadly expressed, women are often segregated against because of their sexual orientation, and youths because of their age, but both groups have the right to participate in decision making affecting their well-being (Checkoway, 2011). Moreover, women are experts in the women perspective and so are the youths in youth perspective, thus the social inclusion principle opines that no social group is less equal to the other in public social processes and process decisions in the culmination to quality community development decisions (Augsberger, Collins, & Gecker, 2017). Focusing on youth, Checkoway (1998) put it well that often local ward-based activities that involve the youth are characterised by lack of information about the community context, and usually when young people organise themselves, they are challenged by lack of resources and adult resistance.

2.3. Participation in local governance programs

Participatory local governance refers to the manner in which local authorities run their affairs between election seasons, which can be successfully attained through community participation. The World Bank defines participation as “a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over developmental initiatives, decisions and resources which affect them” (World Bank, 1994). It is generally agreeable that participation is an indispensable requirement for sustainable local governance, through its role towards improvement in the flow of information, accountability, transparency and civic capacitation. The right to participate at local level is guaranteed in the constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) as well as other pieces of legislation. Section 194 (1) of the constitution demands that local authorities must create an environment that encourage public participation in the policy making process and timely address of residents' needs (Constitution of Zimbabwe, 2013).

Youths, particularly those below the age of 18 are generally perceived as minority persons whose political rights should be preserved and represented by their parents or legal guardians until they reach the age of majority, defining their eligibility to vote (Chan & Clayton, 2006; Ekman & Amna, 2012). They are generally perceived as lacking experience and emotional maturity for decision making (Chan & Clayton, 2006), notwithstanding their bright promise as future leaders (Farthing, 2010). Civic engagement among the youth has been described as taking four distinct forms, being citizen participation; grassroots organising; intergroup

dialogue and socio-political development(Checkoway & Aldana, 2013). The most popularly discussed form of youths' participation is the youth councils; however, it is not the only form of youths' involvement. Generally, there seem to be a consensus that youths ought to be involved in all forms of participation, including being political actors. This paper is therefore motivated by the noted underrepresentation of youths in regular democratic forums and general low participation of youths and women in local governance and developmental programs as noted in the city of Gweru. It then seeks to add to existing literature through establishing the key barriers hindering youths and women participation in local governance programs and solicit for possible remedies from the subject groups.

III. METHOD

The study used quantitative data collected from 90 purposively selected questionnaire respondents from the City of Gweru. Research data was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and R software. Questionnaires were pre-coded and post coded for input into the statistical applications. Correlation and regression tests were performed in assessing factors influencing the way women and youths perceive the concept of participation in light of noted barriers. The Kruskal Wallis test and Mann-Whitney test were used to test the effect of control variables, thus noted perceptions, barriers and demographic factors, respectively.

IV. FINDINGS

4.1 Perceptions towards participation

An analysis was done on factors influencing how respondents' perceptions of the concept of participation. Majority of the respondents believe that participation in local government programmes increase opportunities for the youth (57.8%) and consultative meetings and feedback meetings conducted by the local authority enhance functionality of decision making (83.3%). It was however noted that most women (85.5%) and youth (77.8%) are generally with the view that public policy matters are for men only and structural equity in public policy is a fallacy. However, interestingly women and youths' respondents understand that by exercising their rights, they would not be taking rights away from men(91.1%) and exercising their rights does not mean that men lose out(82.3%), as they still have their bestowed societal value. It was however worrying to learn that majority of respondents were not sure whether gender and age factors will not influence their rights to participate in local government programs(68.8%). Table 1 below represents dominating percentage responses to issues raised during an assessment of respondents' perceptions towards participation in local developmental programs.

Table 1: Frequency of responses to factors in assessment of perceptions

Observed Variable	Frequency responses: Agree to Strongly agree	
	Number	Percentage
Participation in local governance increases opportunities for women and youth	52	57.8%
Call for consultative meetings, community feedback and follow up action on resolutions enhance the functionality of all decision-making structures.	75	83.3%
Public policy formulation is for men only	77	85.7
Structural equity in public policy is a fallacy	70	77.8
Women are disproportionately subject to discrimination, exploitation, and poverty.	72	80
I think that women and youths must be treated the same way as men in local governance decision making	74	82.2
It is prudent that women and youths take on menial and low-paid jobs and rarely occupy senior leadership positions	80	88.9%
	Frequency responses: Disagree to Strongly disagree	
Women and youth are entitled to full rights of participation in local governance	34	37.8
When women and youths get rights, they are taking rights away from men	82	91.1
Rights for women and youths mean that men lose out	74	82.3

Source: Researchers, 2020

4.2 Barriers impeding participation

An analysis was done of responses pointing to what respondents perceive as barriers hindering full participation of youth and women in local development programs. Results reveal that majority of the respondents point to lack of resources, women and youth being victims of political violence, suffering from stereotyping and failure by women to support each other as leading hindrances against participation. Notwithstanding the enormity and significance of barriers noted, 80% of responses reveal that women and youth possess requisite capabilities to take leading roles in developmental programs.

Table 2: Barriers hindering full participation of women and youth in local developmental programs

Observed variable	Frequency responses: Agree to Strongly agree	
	Number	Percentage
Lack of resources restrict women and youth participation in local governance programs	81	90
Women and youths are always victims of political violence and abuse by politicians.	75	83.4
Women tend to get low paid jobs and rarely occupy senior leadership positions.	83	92.2
Women and youths usually suffer from stereotyping	85	94.4
Most local governance programs inherently have male biased internal political systems	71	78.9
Women do not support each other in rising through the ranks of leadership.	70	77.81
Male counterparts deny their wives opportunity to participate in public space	78	86.7
Women and youths are ignorant of their right to participation in local governance programs.	86	95.5
Our African culture supports patriarchy	84	93.3
	Frequency responses: Disagree to Strongly disagree	
Women and youths have limited capabilities to execute roles in the public sphere.	72	80.0

Source: Researchers, 2020

Out of 90 respondents surveyed, 51 (56.7%) were females whilst 39(43.3%) were males. The female representation was dominant since they represented two different demographic categorizations, age and gender. As such, an analysis was conducted to assess whether there are differences in the distributions of the responses among youth and women, helping to assess the possible existence of biases in responses obtained. The Mann Whitney U test was selected as the most suitable test for the current study since the sample size was small and the data was not normally distributed. The decision rule is based on the significance of the p-value. If the p-value is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the constant variance has not been met.

4.3 The effect of gender on perceptions and barriers

The research tested whether male and female participants have different perceptions towards participation and view different factors as barriers hindering their participation in local governance and developmental issues. The Mann Whitney U test, also known as the Wilcoxon test for independent samples was computed and the results presented in Tables 1 and 2 below:

Research question: Is there a difference between the mean/median perceptions or barriers responses based on the gender groups?

To address this question, the hypothesis can be stated as:

H₀: *The perceptions or barriers responses means/medians are the same across gender groups, versus;*

H₁: *The perceptions or barriers responses means/medians are not the same across gender groups.*

Table 1 results indicate that the hypothesis is insignificant for all the indicator variables at the 5% level of significance and it can be concluded that the mean/median responses across the males and female groups are not significantly different from each other, meaning there are common views towards participation in local developmental programs across gender groups. Also, the results indicate common factors being indicated as barriers among male and female respondents. This was indicated by all the p-values that are >0.005. The only noted exception was on the lack of resources and support questions. These were questions suggesting that lack of resources was restricting women and youths' participation in local governance issues and women failing to

support their colleagues in positions of authority questions, having a p-values of 0.023 and 0.047 respectively. Under these two case questions significant differences among male and female responses were noted, table 2 below refers.

Table 1: Mann-Whitney test on perceptions across the gender group

Test Statistics^a

	Part in local by wom and youth can increase opportunities	consul meetings, comm feed and followups enhance dec_making	Wom and youth entitled to full rights particip	Wom and youth should be treated same in local particip	Wom and youth if given rights, they take them away from men	Public policy form is for men only	Struc policy in public policy is a fallacy	wom and youth take men and low pay jobs and not occup leadership_pos	Women are disp subjected to discr, exploitat and poverty	Rights for wom and youth mean lose out
Mann-Whitney U	933.000	931.000	844.000	888.500	948.000	966.500	937.000	943.500	986.500	978.000
Wilcoxon W	1773.000	2257.000	2170.000	1668.500	2274.000	1746.500	1717.000	2269.500	1766.500	1758.000
Z	-.013	-.569	-1.258	-.933	-.421	-.244	-.503	-.459	-.071	-.145
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.989	.569	.208	.351	.674	.807	.615	.646	.944	.884

a. Grouping Variable: Gender

Table 2: Mann-Whitney test on barriers across the gender group

Test Statistics^a

	Lack of resourc restric wom and youth partic	Wom and youth are victim of polit violen and abuse	wom tend to get low pay jobs and rarely occup senio leadership	Women are incapab to take activ roles in public spher	Wom and youth suffer from streotyping	Loca gvt programs have male biased polit systems	Wom fail to suppor each other in ranks of leadership	Men deny wives to particip in public space	Women and youth are ignor of rights in local gvt partic	Afric cultur supports patricacy
Mann-Whitney U	750.500	899.000	973.000	962.000	873.500	929.000	767.500	825.500	815.000	985.500
Wilcoxon W	1530.500	1679.000	1753.000	1742.000	2199.500	1709.000	2093.500	2151.500	1595.000	2311.500
Z	-2.271	-.867	-.196	-.284	-1.149	-.577	-1.990	-1.507	-1.666	-.082
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.023	.386	.845	.777	.250	.564	.047	.132	.096	.935

a. Grouping Variable: Gender

Source: Researchers, 2020.

4.4 The effects of marital status, age group and qualification groups on perceptions and barriers and strategies

The Kruskal Wallis is a non-parametric test applied to test whether there are significant differences in the dependent ordinal variable when one has three or more independent categorical factors. Kruskal-Wallis compares the medians of two or more samples to determine if these samples have come from different populations. It is an extension of the Mann-Whitney U test to three or more groups. The distributions do not have to be normal and the variances do not have to be equal. The Kruskal-Wallis test is applied to test if there are significant differences in the mean responses on perceptions, barriers and the associated strategies to counter noted barriers. The hypothesis can therefore be stated as:

H₀: The mean/median responses on dependent variables (Perceptions, Barriers and Strategies) are the same across the Qualification, Marital Status and Age groups, versus;

H₁: The mean/median responses on Dependent variables (Perceptions, Barriers and Strategies) are not the same across the Qualification, Marital Status and Age groups.

Generally, it can be noted that responses on perceptions across the marital status group (Table 3), age group (Table 4) and qualification group (Table 5) are not significantly different from each other since all the p-values are more than 0.05. An analysis of responses on barriers reveals significant differences on other observed constructs since the p values are less than 0.05. Firstly, on the responses on barriers across the marital status group (Table 7) the variable, assessing whether women and youths are ignorant of their right to participation in local governance programs with a p-value of 0.02 < 0.05. The value is significant at 5% and shows that there are significant differences. Secondly the construct: Male counterparts deny their wives opportunity to participate in public space, the p-value is 0.049 which is slightly less than 0.05 (can also be considered as indifferent). However, male counterparts denying their wives opportunity to participate in public space is significantly different across the age group (p-value 0.012 < 0.05) Table 7 refers. Lastly, tests revealed that barriers responses across the qualification group (Table 8) are not significantly different since the p-values are all more than 0.05.

Table 3: Kruskal Wallis tests on Perceptions across the marital status group

Test Statistics ^{a,b}

	Part in localg by wom and youthcan increase opportunities	consul meetings, comm feed and followups enhance dec_making	Wom and youth entitled to full rights particip	Wom and youth shouldbe treated same in logcvt partc	Wom and youth if given rights, they take them away from men	Public policy form is for men only	Struc policy in public policy is a fallacy	wom and youth take men and low payjobs and not occup leadership_p os	Women are disp subjected to discr, exploitat and poverty	Rights for wom and youth mean lose out
Chi-Square	4.664	5.488	2.476	3.246	6.311	3.301	1.747	5.326	.212	2.166
df	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	.198	.139	.480	.355	.097	.347	.627	.149	.976	.539

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: Marital status of respondent

Table 4 : Kruskal Wallis tests on Perceptions across the Age group

Test Statistics ^{a,b}

	Part in localg by wom and youthcan increase opportunities	consul meetings, comm feed and followups enhance dec_making	Wom and youth entitled to full rights particip	Wom and youth shouldbe treated same in logcvt partc	Wom and youth if given rights, they take them away from men	Public policy form is for men only	Struc policy in public policy is a fallacy	wom and youth take men and low payjobs and not occup leadership_p os	Women are disp subjected to discr, exploitat and poverty	Rights for wom and youth mean lose out
Chi-Square	1.178	1.084	6.190	6.393	.394	2.337	.904	7.536	.781	5.073
df	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	.758	.781	.103	.094	.942	.505	.825	.057	.854	.167

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: Age of resp

Source: Researchers, 2020

Table 5: Kruskal Wallis tests on Perceptions across Qualification group

Test Statistics ^{a,b}

	Part in localg by wom and youthcan increase opportunities	consul meetings, comm feed and followups enhance dec_making	Wom and youth entitled to full rights particip	Wom and youth shouldbe treated same in logcvt partc	Wom and youth if given rights, they take them away from men	Public policy form is for men only	Struc policy in public policy is a fallacy	wom and youth take men and low payjobs and not occup leadership_p os	Women are disp subjected to discr, exploitat and poverty	Rights for wom and youth mean lose out
Chi-Square	1.911	4.964	2.877	3.176	1.295	3.489	4.214	6.540	4.350	7.239
df	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	.752	.291	.579	.529	.862	.480	.378	.162	.361	.124

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: Qualification

Table 6: Kruskal_Wallis tests on Barriers across the Age group

Test Statistics ^{a,b}

	Lack of resourc restric wom and youth partic	Wom and youth are victim of polit violen and abuse	wom tend to get low pay jobs and rarely occup senio leadership	Women are incapab to take activ roles in public spher	Wom and youth suffer from streatotyping	Loca gvt programs have male biased polit systems	Wom fail to suppor each other in ranks of leadership	Men deny wives to particip in public space	Women and youth are ignor of rights in local gvt partic	Afric cultur supports patricacy
Chi-Square	1.405	5.081	3.010	5.217	1.919	7.648	4.840	10.980	.480	6.216
df	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	.704	.166	.390	.157	.589	.054	.184	.012	.923	.102

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: Age of resp

Source: Researchers, 2020

Table 7: Kruskal-Wallis tests on Barriers across the marital status group

Test Statistics ^{a,b}

	Lack of resourc restric wom and youth partic	Wom and youth are victim of polit violen and abuse	wom tend to get low pay jobs and rarely occup senio leadership	Women are incapab to take activ roles in public spher	Wom and youth suffer from streotyping	Loca gvt programs have male biased polit systems	Wom fail to suppor each other in ranks of leadership	Men deny wives to particip in public space	Women and youth are ignor of rights in local gvt partic	Afric cultur supports patricacy
Chi-Square	3.901	1.101	1.033	.544	1.104	7.700	2.600	7.848	9.882	3.386
df	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	.272	.777	.793	.909	.776	.053	.457	.049	.020	.336

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: Marital status of respondent

Table 8: Kruskal-Wallis tests on Barriers across the Qualification group

Test Statistics ^{a,b}

	Lack of resourc restric wom and youth partic	Wom and youth are victim of polit violen and abuse	wom tend to get low pay jobs and rarely occup senio leadership	Women are incapab to take activ roles in public spher	Wom and youth suffer from streotyping	Loca gvt programs have male biased polit systems	Wom fail to suppor each other in ranks of leadership	Men deny wives to particip in public space	Women and youth are ignor of rights in local gvt partic	Afric cultur supports patricacy
Chi-Square	7.966	6.207	2.517	3.950	.836	1.972	2.907	4.458	1.369	2.826
df	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	.093	.184	.642	.413	.934	.741	.574	.348	.850	.587

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: Qualification

Source: Researchers, 2020

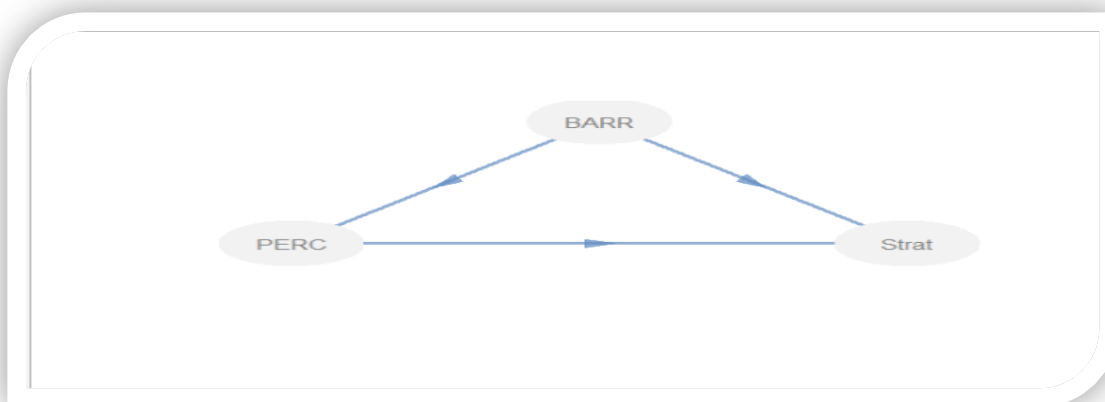
4.5 PLS-SEM evaluation

Partial Least Squares-Path Models(PLS-PM) analysis has been done using R version 3.6.2. The PLS-PM path analysis involves an analysis of:

- the measurement model or inner model where relationships between the latent variables are examined using factor loadings.
- the structural model or outer model where relationships between latent variables and manifest variables are done through an examination of path coefficients.

Reflective model type A is applied in the analysis by use of Gaston Sanchez model system(2013), PLS –Path Modelling with R. Basically there are three latent variables namely Barriers, Perceptions and Strategies, where each latent variable has ten manifest variables.

Figure 1: A path diagram for the inner model is drawn in R to visualize the scenario.



Source: Researchers, 2020

4.6 The Structural (inner) model analysis

The structural model explores the relationships between latent variables. The theoretical framework (hypothesised) model assumes that the nature of the barriers influences both stakeholder perceptions and the possible strategies to remedy whilst perceptions positively affects strategies. The formulated hypothesis can be stated as:

H₁: Perceptions (PERC) is positively and significantly explained by the nature of Barriers (BAR)

H₂: *Strategies (STRAT) is positively and significantly explained by the nature of Barriers (BAR).*

H₃: *Strategies (STRAT) is positively and significantly explained how stakeholders perceive participation (PERC).*

The Partial Least Squares Path Modelling has been used in the current study with main objective of rejecting the null hypotheses regarding the path relationships between latent variables in the above three hypotheses.

The analysis results as in table below reveal that that for H1: barriers positively and significantly affect perceptions with a coefficient of 0.307 and a p-value of 0.00329 which is highly significant therefore hypothesis (H1) is answered. Barriers also significantly affect strategies with a coefficient of 0.261 and a p-value 0.00561 which is highly significant hence Hypothesis (H2) is answered. Perceptions also positively and significantly affect strategies with a coefficient of 0.44 and a p-value of 0.0000072 which is highly significant both at 5% and 1% levels of significance. It can be concluded that the construct 'perception' is dominant in positively and significantly explaining the strategies as compared to the barriers construct. Consequently, all the three hypotheses have been retained at the 5% level. It is therefore important for authorities to be on the lookout for stakeholder perceptions as they significantly affect behaviours. The table of results show that most of the direct and indirect effects relationships are positive This validates that the theoretical model is better and suitable to model the interrelationships between the blocks.

INNER MODEL

\$PERC3				
	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(> t)
Intercept	-1.64e-16	0.101	-1.61e-15	1.00000
BARR3	3.07e-01	0.101	3.02e+00	0.00329
\$Strat3				
	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(> t)
Intercept	-1.38e-16	0.0876	-1.58e-15	1.00e+00
BARR3	2.61e-01	0.0921	2.84e+00	5.61e-03
PERC3	4.40e-01	0.0921	4.78e+00	7.20e-06

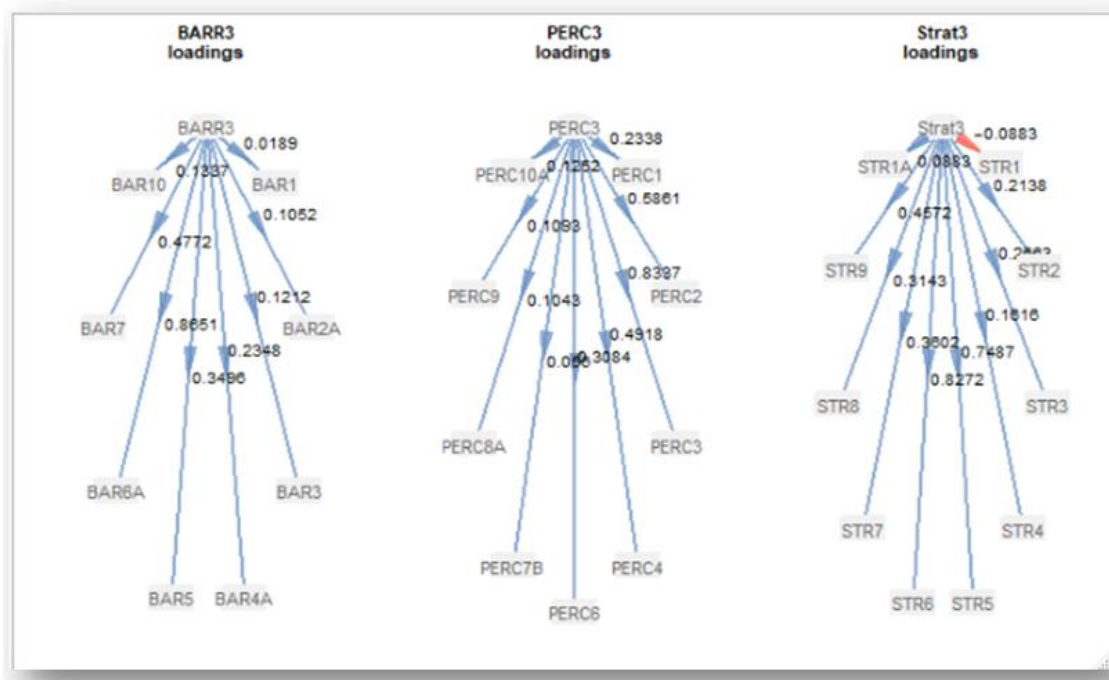
CORRELATIONS BETWEEN LVS			
	BARR3	PERC3	Strat3
BARR3	1.000	0.307	0.396
PERC3	0.307	1.000	0.520
Strat3	0.396	0.520	1.000

TOTAL EFFECTS				
relationships	direct	indirect	total	
1 BARR3 -> PERC3	0.307	0.000	0.307	
2 BARR3 -> Strat3	0.261	0.135	0.396	
3 PERC3 -> Strat3	0.440	0.000	0.440	

4.7 The measurement (outer) model

An analysis of the measurement model mostly focuses on the loadings/correlations between the latent variables and manifest variables. The analysis will also take a possible look at model refinement through removal of manifest variables that cross-load with other latent variables (a variable cross-loads with another latent variable if its loading is less than another factor it does not belong to). Such variables need to be dropped. It can therefore be concluded from the outer model that the perception variable has observable variables with higher loadings.

Figure 2: The measurement (outer) model



Source: Researchers, 2020

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A quantitative analysis of the data obtained from 90 respondents established that residents in the city of Gweru are quite aware of the concept of democratic governance, participation and the associated benefits. However, a handful of barriers were noted as standing on the way of youths and women participation in local development programs. Noted challenges include partisan politics, poor accountability, rubber-stamping and lack of support for democratic participation. A Partial Least Squares Path Models analysis reveal that the ‘perception’ variable is the most significant predictor of strategies in the structural (inner) model. The PLS-PM analysis also reveal that most manifest variables are positively and significantly related with their latent variables. This therefore entails that authorities should invest more in managing stakeholder perceptions, as they significantly influence their behaviours. Stakeholder perception towards local governance programs and the local authority at large can easily be motivation through promoting stakeholder engagement and consultation.

The study recommends the need to enhance youths and women participation in local development programs, through encouraging councillors to be non-partisan and abide by the oath of office. The study recommends the need to empower youth and women through community projects, conducting programs meant to address financial and administrative constraints and fostering understanding of participation processes and legal frameworks. The study also recommends the need to generally improve relationships between councillors, council management and residents. This would go a long way improving transparency and accountability, and stakeholder perception, with a potential to positively influence residents’ compliance behaviour in payment of council bills. Improvement in the resident’s compliance behaviour has a multiplier effect in improving the local authority’s revenue inflows which could transform in to improved service delivery.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest to declare for this publication

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