

CLAN STRUCTURE AND CITIZENS' PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNANCE A STUDY IN PUNTLAND STATE, SOMALIA.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter serves as the foundation for understanding the dynamics of clan structure and citizens' participation in governance in Puntland State, Somalia. In a region characterized by complex social hierarchies and historical Clan affiliations, the relationship between traditional governance and civic engagement is crucial for fostering effective and inclusive political systems. This introductory section outlines the background of the study by providing historical, theoretical, conceptual, and contextual perspectives, which collectively frame the inquiry into how clan structures influence governance participation. The statement of the problem highlights the challenges faced in promoting citizen involvement in governance amidst entrenched clan dynamics. The purpose of the study is articulated alongside specific objectives and research questions that guide the investigation. The scope of the study delineates its geographical, content, time, and theoretical boundaries, ensuring a focused approach to the research. Furthermore, the significance of this study is discussed, emphasizing its potential contributions to both academic discourse and practical governance strategies in Puntland. Finally, key terms are operationally defined to establish clarity for the reader, and the conceptual framework is presented to visually represent the relationships between the variables under investigation. Through this chapter, the study aims to lay a comprehensive groundwork for exploring the interplay between clan structures and citizens' participation in governance, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of governance dynamics in Puntland State.

1.1 Background to the study

1.1.1 Historical perspective

Globally, citizens' participation in governance has progressed significantly, with democratic frameworks in developed nations promoting greater inclusion of the populace in decision-making processes. For example, in countries like the United States and the United Kingdom, political systems are designed to allow regular participation through elections, public consultations, and decentralized governance (Norris, 2019). These systems enable citizens to engage with governance through political parties, civil society organizations, and, increasingly, digital platforms, fostering accountability and transparency. However, challenges persist, particularly among racial and ethnic minorities who continue to face socio-economic barriers that limit their participation in political processes. In the U.S., for instance, studies show that African Americans and Latino communities have lower voter turnout and political engagement due to systemic inequalities (Leighley & Nagler, 2020). Despite these systems promoting citizen participation, structural inequities remain, often rooted in historical social divisions.

At the African level, ethnic and clan affiliations significantly shape governance and citizen participation. Many African nations, including Nigeria and Kenya, have long struggled with ethnic politics. In Nigeria, major ethnic groups such as the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo dominate the political landscape, which has often led to the marginalization of smaller ethnic groups in both governance and electoral processes (Suberu, 2020). The Nigerian political system, though democratic, reflects deep ethnic divisions that shape citizens' participation, often leading to exclusion and conflict. Kenya provides another example where ethnic identity profoundly affects political dynamics. Ethnic allegiances have historically determined political loyalties, often resulting in electoral violence, such as the 2007 post-election crisis that exposed how ethnic favoritism could disrupt citizen engagement in governance (Kanyinga, 2021). In both cases, ethnic politics create barriers to broad-based citizen participation, limiting the ability of diverse communities to fully engage in governance.

In East Africa, countries like Uganda and Ethiopia also highlight the role of ethnic and clan structures in shaping governance. Uganda's political landscape, deeply influenced by the Buganda kingdom and other ethnic groups, presents a scenario where traditional governance systems interact with modern state structures. The integration of ethnic affiliations into the political process has often resulted in exclusionary practices, with smaller ethnic groups finding it difficult to participate fully in governance (Ndebesa, 2020). In Ethiopia, ethnic federalism,

implemented in the 1995 constitution to accommodate the country's diverse ethnic groups, has led to both increased participation and significant conflict. The federal system has given ethnic groups autonomy in their regions, but it has also fueled competition and conflict, especially between larger groups like the Oromo and Tigrayans, limiting cohesive national governance and reducing overall citizen participation (Abbink, 2021). These examples from East Africa demonstrate how ethnic and clan structures can either enhance or hinder citizen participation depending on the political framework.

In Somalia, and particularly Puntland, clan structures have been the cornerstone of governance. The clan-based political system, deeply rooted in Somali society, has long influenced governance and citizen participation (Farah, 2021). Somalia's political landscape operates under a 4.5 power-sharing model, which allocates political representation and parliamentary seats based on clan affiliation. While this system was designed to prevent the dominance of any single clan, it has unintentionally entrenched clan identities, limiting the participation of individuals outside the dominant clans and creating a perception of exclusion for marginalized groups (Elmi, 2022). The 4.5 system, while stabilizing in some respects, has also curtailed broader participation in governance, as citizens' engagement is often mediated by their clan identity.

Puntland, as a semi-autonomous region of Somalia, reflects these broader national dynamics, with clan structures playing a pivotal role in governance. Since its establishment in 1998, Puntland's governance system has integrated both traditional and modern political structures. Clan elders, known as *Isimo*, wield significant influence in local governance, often making key decisions about leadership and political appointments based on clan affiliations. This system can limit citizen participation, as clan allegiances often overshadow merit-based political engagement (Hassan & Menkhaus, 2022). Furthermore, while Puntland has made considerable progress in state-building, the dominance of clan elders in governance processes has sometimes led to governance structures that prioritize clan loyalty over institutional accountability and broader citizen involvement. Women and minority groups, in particular, face significant barriers to political participation due to the strong influence of clan-based decision-making (Ahmed, 2021). For example, the representation of women in Puntland's parliament remains low, and their participation in political decision-making is often curtailed by cultural norms that prioritize male leadership within clans.

1.1.2 Theoretical perspective

The study will be premised on the two theories that is the Social Identity Theory developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the early 1970s and the Participatory Governance Theory developed and refined by John Gaventa and Rosemary McGee in the early 2000s.

This study will be underpinned on the Social Identity Theory was developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the early 1970s, with significant contributions made in their seminal work published in 1979. This theory arose from research focused on intergroup discrimination and social categorization, illustrating how individuals derive a sense of identity from their group memberships and the psychological effects of these affiliations (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

The theory is grounded in several key assumptions. First, social categorization posits that individuals classify themselves and others into various social groups based on attributes such as ethnicity, nationality, or clan. This categorization leads to social comparison, where individuals assess their group (the in-group) against other groups (the out-group) to enhance self-esteem. Consequently, this results in in-group favoritism, where individuals show preference for their own group, which can manifest as discrimination against out-group members. Lastly, group identity significantly influences behaviors, attitudes, and perceptions, particularly in contexts like governance and political participation, as individuals often act in ways that reflect their allegiance to their group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Social Identity Theory is particularly relevant to the study of clan structure and citizens' participation in governance in Puntland State, Somalia. In this context, clan affiliations are a fundamental aspect of social identity, shaping individuals' political behaviors and levels of engagement. By applying this theory, the study can investigate how identification with a clan influences perceptions of governmental legitimacy, willingness to participate in political processes, and interactions with governance institutions. For instance, individuals may be more inclined to engage in governance activities that align with their clan's interests, fostering a sense of belonging and collective action (Abdi, 2023). Thus, understanding the dynamics of clan identity through this theoretical lens can deepen insights into civic engagement in Puntland.

However, Social Identity Theory also has its limitations in this study. While it provides a robust framework for understanding identity-driven behavior and in-group favoritism, it may not fully

account for the complexities of governance structures and individual motivations in a post-conflict context like Puntland. Other significant factors, such as socioeconomic status, education, and access to information, also shape citizens' participation, which the theory does not explicitly address. Additionally, the focus on intergroup dynamics may overlook how broader political and economic contexts influence governance participation (Mohamed, 2022). Therefore, while Social Identity Theory offers valuable insights, it should be considered alongside other theories and contextual factors to develop a holistic understanding of governance participation in Puntland.

Participatory Governance Theory

This study will also be guided by the Participatory Governance Theory has been developed and refined by various scholars over the years, but one of the pivotal contributions comes from the work of scholars such as John Gaventa and Rosemary McGee in the early 2000s. Their research emphasized the importance of citizen engagement in governance processes and the mechanisms that facilitate or hinder this participation (Gaventa & McGee, 2013). This theory highlights that effective governance requires not just the presence of institutions, but also the active involvement of citizens in decision-making.

Participatory Governance Theory is based on several key assumptions. First, it asserts that citizen engagement is essential for legitimate governance, suggesting that when citizens have a voice in decision-making, governance becomes more accountable and responsive. Second, the theory posits that inclusive participation leads to better outcomes, as diverse perspectives can contribute to more effective policies and solutions. Third, it recognizes that power dynamics play a crucial role in participation; marginalized groups often face barriers to engagement, and addressing these disparities is necessary for achieving true participatory governance. Lastly, the theory emphasizes the importance of transparency and communication, which are vital for fostering trust and encouraging citizen involvement in governance processes (Gaventa & McGee, 2013).

Participatory Governance Theory is highly relevant to the study of clan structure and citizens' participation in governance in Puntland State, Somalia. Given the centrality of clan dynamics in Somali society, understanding how these structures influence citizen engagement is crucial. The theory can help illuminate how traditional governance mechanisms, such as clan councils, either

facilitate or obstruct participation. It also underscores the need for inclusivity, which is particularly important in a context where certain clans may dominate political discourse, potentially sidelining others. By applying this theory, the study can explore how participatory mechanisms can be enhanced to ensure that all clans have equitable opportunities to engage in governance, thereby fostering a more inclusive political environment (Farah, 2023).

However, the theory also has its limitations in this study. While Participatory Governance Theory emphasizes citizen engagement, it may not fully account for the complexities of clan politics and the historical context of conflict in Somalia. The focus on participatory mechanisms could overlook the entrenched power dynamics that exist within and between clans, which can significantly impact participation. Moreover, while the theory advocates for transparency and communication, it may not adequately address the practical challenges of implementing these principles in a post-conflict society where trust in governance institutions is often low (Mohamed, 2022). Therefore, while Participatory Governance Theory provides valuable insights into the importance of citizen engagement, it should be complemented with analyses of the unique socio-political landscape of Puntland to understand the barriers and facilitators of participation in governance.

Social Identity Theory and Participatory Governance Theory both offer valuable insights for understanding citizens' participation in governance within Puntland State, Somalia. Social Identity Theory, developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner, emphasizes the significance of clan affiliations in shaping individual identities and influencing political behavior, suggesting that strong clan ties can enhance or inhibit civic engagement based on in-group favoritism and social comparison (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Abdi, 2023). In contrast, Participatory Governance Theory, articulated by scholars like John Gaventa and Rosemary McGee, underscores the necessity of citizen engagement for legitimate governance, highlighting the importance of inclusivity, transparency, and the need to address power dynamics that may marginalize certain groups (Gaventa & McGee, 2013; Farah, 2023). Together, these theories provide a comprehensive framework for analyzing how clan structures and participatory mechanisms interact to shape governance participation in Puntland, revealing both the cultural influences of clan identity and the institutional barriers to effective civic engagement.

1.1.3 Conceptual perspective

The conceptual perspective of this study aims to thoroughly explore the relationship between clan structures (the independent variable) and citizen participation in governance (the dependent variable). This exploration will build on the insights from various scholars to create a comprehensive theoretical foundation, especially in the context of Puntland State, Somalia.

Clan structures are deeply embedded in Somali society and have historically been a cornerstone of governance and political organization. In the absence of strong state institutions, clans have served as both a source of identity and a mechanism for political representation and conflict resolution. Clan elders often wield considerable authority, serving as intermediaries between the government and the people (Elmi, 2022). These structures can influence governance by either facilitating inclusive participation or entrenching a system of exclusion based on clan loyalties. For instance, in many Somali regions, political offices are distributed according to clan-based quotas, which impacts citizens' ability to participate in governance based on their clan affiliation (Hassan & Menkhaus, 2022). Scholars have argued that while these structures provide a certain level of stability, they can also hinder broader democratic participation by prioritizing clan interests over national interests (Ahmed, 2021).

Citizen participation refers to the engagement of individuals in decision-making processes that affect their lives and communities. In democratic contexts, participation typically involves voting, attending public meetings, engaging with local leaders, and contributing to policy discussions. However, in clan-based systems like that of Puntland, formal participation in governance is often mediated through clan elders or leaders. This system, while effective in some cases, can limit direct citizen participation, especially for marginalized clans, women, and youth (Farah, 2021).

In many cases, clan structures both facilitate and constrain governance participation. For example, clan elders in Puntland often hold informal power to make decisions on behalf of their communities, which can either enhance or inhibit citizen engagement in governance. While elders may represent the interests of their clan, this form of participation is indirect and may not reflect the broader interests of the population (Gundel, 2023). The 4.5 power-sharing formula, used to distribute political positions in Somalia based on clan representation, has been criticized for reinforcing clan divisions and limiting genuine democratic participation (Elmi, 2022). This

quota-based system tends to marginalize smaller clans and limits women's political roles, despite their efforts to engage more fully in governance (Ahmed, 2021).

The conceptualization of citizen participation within the framework of clan-based governance reflects a hybrid system where formal democratic practices intersect with traditional clan dynamics. Scholars have pointed out that while this system has helped manage conflicts and distribute power, it often undermines broader democratic governance by reinforcing clan loyalties and patronage networks (Hassan & Menkhaus, 2022). Additionally, this system can create challenges in governance, as it reduces accountability and transparency, given that clan interests may conflict with national priorities (Farah, 2021).

The current study will address the gap in understanding the nuanced effects of these clan structures on citizen participation in governance. It will assess whether clan structures promote inclusivity or exacerbate exclusion in Puntland's governance framework, with particular attention to the roles of marginalized groups, such as women and smaller clans. While existing literature has acknowledged the influence of clans in governance, there is limited research on how these structures specifically affect everyday citizen engagement in governance processes, especially in the Puntland context.

In summary, this conceptual perspective will explore the intersection of clan structures and citizen participation, building on existing scholarship while addressing the gap in understanding how these traditional systems affect modern governance in Puntland.

1.1.4 Contextual Perspective

The dependent variable of this study is citizen participation in governance, particularly in Puntland, Somalia. Citizen participation refers to the active involvement of individuals in political decision-making processes, including voting, public consultations, engagement with government institutions, and holding public office. In Puntland, citizen participation is largely shaped by traditional clan structures, political systems, and social dynamics, which present both opportunities and challenges for inclusive governance.

Puntland, located in northeastern Somalia, operates under a hybrid political system that blends traditional clan-based governance with modern democratic institutions. Since its establishment as

an autonomous region in 1998, Puntland has made significant strides in building state institutions and promoting stability. However, citizen participation in governance remains limited, particularly due to the dominance of clan structures and patriarchal norms that marginalize certain groups, such as women, youth, and minority clans.

According to recent reports, Puntland's electoral process is heavily influenced by clan-based representation, often referred to as the "4.5 power-sharing formula." This formula allocates political positions based on clan affiliations, ensuring that dominant clans maintain control over key political offices while smaller clans are underrepresented (Mohamed & Elmi, 2022). Although this system has contributed to relative peace and stability, it has also perpetuated clan divisions and reduced opportunities for broader citizen participation. In Puntland's most recent electoral process, only a small fraction of the population, primarily clan elders, were involved in selecting representatives (Ali, 2021). This limited participation undermines the democratic principles of inclusivity and equal representation.

Moreover, women's participation in governance remains significantly low in Puntland. Despite advocacy efforts for greater inclusion, only a handful of women hold political offices, and their participation in decision-making processes is minimal (Hassan & Warsame, 2023). Cultural norms that prioritize male leadership and clan-based power dynamics further exacerbate this exclusion. According to the Puntland Women's Development Organization, women's representation in governance structures is below 10%, reflecting deep-rooted gender biases (Farah & Abdi, 2021).

Several challenges hinder effective citizen participation in Puntland's governance. The primary challenge is the overwhelming influence of clan structures, which continue to dominate political and social life in the region. While the clan system has provided a mechanism for conflict resolution and local governance, it often prioritizes clan interests over national interests, limiting the participation of those outside dominant clans (Ahmed & Mohamed, 2022). This system also reinforces a patronage network, where political leaders are beholden to their clans rather than the broader citizenry, thereby reducing accountability and transparency in governance.

Another major challenge is the lack of a comprehensive legal framework that guarantees equal participation for all citizens, regardless of clan affiliation, gender, or social status. While

Puntland's constitution provides for democratic governance, its implementation is often compromised by clan-based power-sharing arrangements, which limit the effectiveness of formal institutions (Yusuf, 2021). Additionally, political violence, insecurity, and limited civic education further restrict the ability of ordinary citizens to participate meaningfully in governance (Ismail, 2020).

Youth participation is also notably low in Puntland's political landscape. Despite the fact that young people constitute the majority of the population, they are largely excluded from political processes. According to a study by the Puntland Youth Council, less than 5% of political positions are held by individuals under the age of 30, and youth participation in elections and public consultations is minimal (Ahmed & Warsame, 2023). This exclusion stems from both cultural norms that prioritize elder leadership and a lack of opportunities for political engagement.

Despite the challenges outlined above, there has been limited research on how clan structures specifically influence citizen participation in governance in Puntland. Most existing studies focus broadly on Somalia or emphasize the role of clan elders in political decision-making, without delving into the implications for ordinary citizens. There is also a gap in understanding how marginalized groups, such as women and youth, experience exclusion in governance processes within the Puntland context. Furthermore, little attention has been given to the impact of political reforms aimed at increasing participation, such as the introduction of direct elections, and how these reforms interact with traditional clan structures.

This study aims to address these gaps by providing a comprehensive analysis of the effects of clan structures on citizen participation in governance, with a particular focus on Puntland. It will explore how clan-based power-sharing arrangements shape political participation, especially for marginalized groups, and assess the effectiveness of current governance reforms in promoting inclusivity. By conducting field research and gathering data on citizen experiences, this study seeks to provide policy recommendations that can enhance citizen participation in Puntland's governance structures.

In addition, this study will address the lack of empirical data on women's and youth participation in Puntland's political processes. By examining the barriers to their engagement and the potential

for greater inclusion, this research will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities for enhancing citizen participation in governance.

In summary, while Puntland has made strides in political stability and governance, significant challenges remain in promoting inclusive citizen participation. The dominance of clan structures, gender biases, and limited opportunities for youth engagement continue to hinder broader participation. This study will fill the existing gaps in the literature by providing a detailed examination of how these clan structures impact governance participation, with the goal of identifying strategies for fostering a more inclusive political environment.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Ideally, every citizen would have equal opportunities to engage in governance processes, including participating in decision-making, holding leaders accountable, and exercising their voting rights. In Puntland, Somalia, the active involvement of all citizens, regardless of their clan affiliation, gender, or age, would ensure that governance is more inclusive, transparent, and responsive to the needs of the broader population. This would enhance legitimacy, accountability, and trust between the government and the citizens (Abdirahman & Mohamed, 2022). However, the actual situation in Puntland is far from this ideal. Governance in Puntland remains heavily influenced by clan structures, where political representation and decision-making are largely controlled by clan elders and elites. This dominance limits the participation of marginalized groups, such as women, youth, and smaller clans, in governance. In the most recent elections, only a small fraction of citizens, mostly clan elders, were directly involved in selecting representatives (Ali & Warsame, 2021). As a result, broader citizen participation in governance is low, which undermines democratic governance and contributes to a lack of accountability and representation (Ahmed & Yusuf, 2023).

The marginalization of women in Puntland's political processes is a significant issue. Despite efforts to increase women's representation, less than 10% of political positions are held by women (Hassan & Farah, 2023). Cultural norms and traditional clan structures continue to marginalize women from decision-making processes, perpetuating gender inequality in governance. Similarly, the youth, who make up a significant portion of the population, are largely excluded from political engagement, with less than 5% of youth participating in

governance processes (Warsame & Hassan, 2022). Several gaps and problems exist in the current governance framework in Puntland that inhibit citizen participation. The primary gap lies in the overwhelming influence of clan-based governance, which favors the interests of dominant clans at the expense of marginalized groups (Ali, 2020). This system hinders the participation of women, youth, and minority clans, who are often excluded from decision-making processes. Moreover, the clan-based power-sharing system prioritizes clan loyalty over national interests, reducing governmental accountability and transparency (Hassan, 2023). Another critical gap is the absence of a comprehensive legal framework that guarantees equal participation for all citizens. Although Puntland's constitution outlines democratic principles, their application is often limited by the dominance of traditional governance structures. Political reforms aimed at increasing inclusivity have also failed to address the underlying challenges posed by clan-based governance, leaving marginalized groups with minimal representation (Hassan & Warsame, 2023). This study aims to address these gaps by exploring the effects of clan structures on citizen participation in governance in Puntland, Somalia

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of clan structure and citizens' participation in governance a study in Puntland State, Somalia.

1.4 Objectives of the study

To assess the effects of clan affiliation on citizens' participation in governance a study in Puntland State, Somalia.

To evaluate the effects of traditional governance structures on citizens' participation in governance a study in Puntland State, Somalia.

To examine the effects of governmental legitimacy and accountability on citizens' participation in governance a study in Puntland State, Somalia.

1.5 Research questions

What are the effects of clan affiliation on citizens' participation in governance a study in Puntland State, Somalia?

What are the effects of traditional governance structures on citizens' participation in governance a study in Puntland State, Somalia?

What are the effects of governmental legitimacy and accountability on citizens' participation in governance a study in Puntland State, Somalia?

1.6 Scope of the Study

1.6.1 Geographical Scope

The study will be conducted in Puntland, Somalia, which is a semi-autonomous region in the northeastern part of the country. Puntland was selected as the study area due to its distinctive governance model that combines traditional clan-based structures with modern state governance. Unlike other parts of Somalia, Puntland has enjoyed relative peace and political stability, making it a significant focus for understanding governance practices. However, despite its stability, Puntland faces challenges in governance, particularly the dominance of clan elders in political processes. This dominance hinders broad-based citizen participation, especially among marginalized groups such as women, youth, and smaller clans (Ali & Warsame, 2021). Furthermore, the electoral system in Puntland remains largely dominated by clan-based appointments rather than universal suffrage, which complicates efforts to promote inclusive governance (Ahmed, 2022). These governance issues and the region's unique socio-political context prompted the researcher to focus on Puntland to explore how clan structures impact citizen participation in governance.

1.6.2 Content Scope

The content scope of the study focuses on the key objectives related to understanding the effects of clan structures on citizens' participation in governance in Puntland. The first objective seeks to assess the effects of clan affiliation on citizens' participation, specifically how loyalty to clan identity influences political engagement and representation. The second objective evaluates the impact of traditional governance structures, such as clan elders, on decision-making and how this affects broader citizen involvement. Lastly, the study examines governmental legitimacy and

accountability, focusing on how these factors either facilitate or limit citizens' participation in governance. Through these objectives, the study aims to uncover the critical barriers posed by clan-based systems and identify potential strategies for fostering more inclusive participation.

1.6.3 Time Scope

This study will covers the period from 2018 to 2024. This six-year time frame was selected because it encompasses key political events and governance reforms in Puntland, such as the 2019 indirect elections where clan elders were responsible for selecting representatives rather than a direct vote by the citizens (Hassan, 2023). These indirect elections highlighted the complexities of clan-based politics and its effects on citizen participation. Additionally, this period includes significant efforts by Puntland's leadership to decentralize governance and promote inclusive political reforms, making it an ideal period for evaluating both the progress and limitations of such efforts (Warsame & Hassan, 2022). The timeframe provides a robust context to examine the evolution of governance practices and the extent of citizen participation in Puntland.

1.6.4 Theoretical Scope

The study will be grounded on two key theories: Social Identity Theory and Participatory Governance Theory. Social Identity Theory, developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the early 1970s, posits that individuals' sense of self is shaped by their membership in social groups such as clans. This theory explains how clan identity can influence political behavior, where loyalty to one's clan often results in in-group favoritism and exclusion of other clans (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This is highly relevant in Puntland, where clan dynamics dominate the political landscape and shape citizens' participation in governance. The second theoretical foundation is the Participatory Governance Theory, developed by John Gaventa and Rosemary McGee in the early 2000s. This theory emphasizes the importance of citizen engagement in governance processes and highlights the role of citizen action in holding public officials accountable and ensuring transparency (Gaventa & McGee, 2010). This study applies both theories to understand how clan structures either promote or hinder active citizen involvement in Puntland's governance and aims to identify pathways for greater inclusivity.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study holds critical importance for various stakeholders involved in governance, development, and policymaking in Puntland, Somalia.

Policymakers and Government Officials

The findings from this study will provide valuable insights to policymakers and government officials in Puntland and Somalia at large. By highlighting the impact of clan structures on citizen participation in governance, the study will offer recommendations for creating more inclusive governance frameworks. This can help in reforming current policies to reduce the influence of clan-based politics, promote meritocracy, and encourage broader participation from all social groups, including women, youth, and minority clans. Such reforms are essential for improving the legitimacy and effectiveness of government institutions in Puntland, contributing to the long-term stability and development of the region (Ahmed & Warsame, 2023).

Civil Society Organizations and Advocacy Groups

Civil society organizations (CSOs) and advocacy groups will benefit significantly from this study, as it explores the barriers to citizen participation caused by entrenched clan systems. The findings will provide CSOs with evidence-based information they can use to advocate for more democratic governance structures. Additionally, this study can support advocacy for the protection of marginalized groups in governance processes, encouraging CSOs to design programs and campaigns that promote equitable political engagement (Mohamud & Farah, 2022).

Academic Researchers and Scholars

For academic researchers and scholars, this study contributes to the body of knowledge on governance, political participation, and clan-based systems in Somalia and the broader Horn of Africa. By providing an in-depth analysis of how traditional clan structures interact with modern governance frameworks, the study will fill gaps in the existing literature, particularly in understanding the role of clan affiliation in shaping governance outcomes. Future researchers can use this study as a foundation for exploring similar issues in other regions of Somalia and beyond (Warsame, 2021).

International Development Partners

International development agencies, donors, and partners engaged in governance and development initiatives in Somalia will find this study useful for shaping their interventions. The research highlights specific challenges related to citizen participation and the role of clans in governance, offering practical recommendations for designing programs that foster more inclusive governance systems. These insights can help international partners allocate resources more effectively and tailor their support to local realities, thereby enhancing the success of their governance-related projects in Puntland (UNDP Somalia, 2023).

Local Communities and Citizens

Local communities, particularly the citizens of Puntland, stand to gain from the outcomes of this study as it addresses the factors that limit their participation in governance. By shedding light on the role of clan dynamics in political processes, the study will empower citizens with knowledge and encourage grassroots movements aimed at increasing political representation and engagement. This can lead to stronger accountability and transparency within government institutions, ensuring that the voices of all social groups are heard in the decision-making processes (Hassan, 2023).

Government Accountability and Transparency Institutions

Institutions focused on promoting government accountability and transparency will benefit from this study by gaining a clearer understanding of how clan-based governance affects the efficacy of accountability mechanisms. The findings will assist these institutions in developing strategies to enhance transparency, reduce corruption, and ensure that governance practices align with democratic principles, leading to more responsible leadership (Guleid, 2022).

1.8 Operational definition of key terms

Clan structure refers to the social organization and hierarchy of clans within a community, particularly in societies where clan affiliations play a significant role in identity and social relations. In the context of Somalia, clan structures encompass various elements, including clan

identity, leadership, norms, and customs that govern interactions among members. Clans serve as primary units of social support and influence decision-making processes, with leaders often acting as key figures in mediating disputes, mobilizing community resources, and facilitating governance. The dynamics of clan structure can significantly shape individuals' experiences, perceptions, and levels of engagement with formal governance systems.

Citizens' participation in governance refers to the active engagement of individuals in the political process and decision-making within their communities. This includes a range of activities such as voting in elections, attending community meetings, advocating for policy changes, and collaborating in local governance initiatives. Participation is essential for fostering democratic governance, as it allows citizens to express their needs and influence the policies that affect their lives. In the context of Puntland State, Somalia, citizens' participation is often mediated by clan structures, where clan identity and relationships can either facilitate or hinder active involvement in governance processes. The level and nature of participation can also reflect the legitimacy and responsiveness of governance institutions to the needs of the community.

Clan affiliation refers to an individual's connection to a specific clan or sub-clan within Somali society, which significantly influences social identity, community relations, and political engagement. This variable encompasses the cultural and social importance of belonging to a clan, the unity among clan members regarding governance issues, and the influence of clan leaders in mobilizing participation.

Traditional governance structures are the informal systems of governance established within clans that guide decision-making and community organization. This variable includes the roles of elder councils, which act as decision-making bodies and mediators, the customary laws that dictate community norms and behaviors, and the mechanisms for conflict resolution that influence participation in governance.

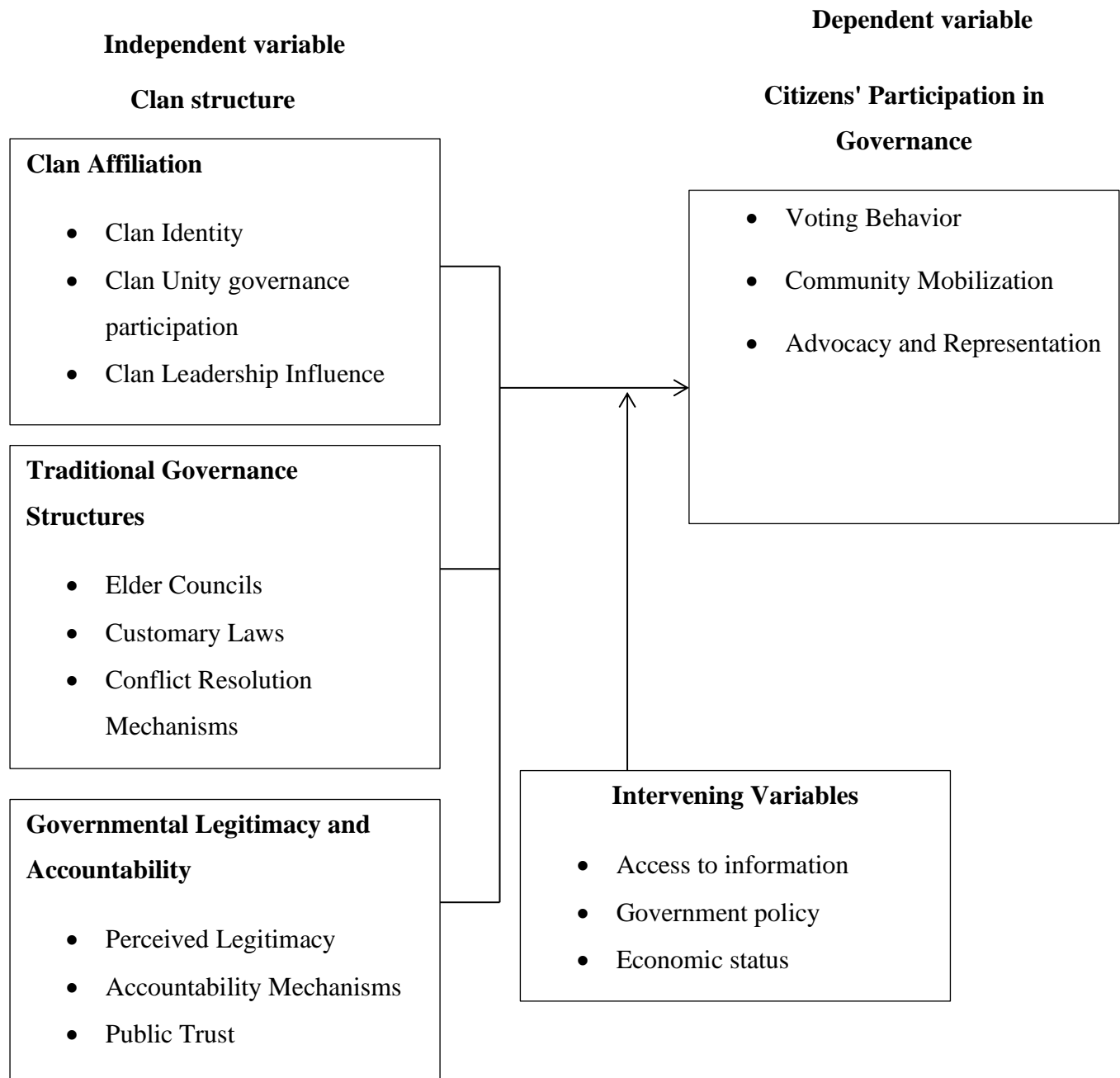
Governmental legitimacy and accountability pertain to the perception of the authority and effectiveness of governing bodies. This variable encompasses citizens' views on the legitimacy of government institutions, the presence of mechanisms that ensure accountability (such as transparency and responsiveness to citizens' needs), and the overall level of public trust in governmental authorities.

Economic status refers to an individual's or household's economic and social position relative to others, based on income, education, and occupation. This variable can influence access to resources, information, and opportunities for participation in governance.

Access to information refers to the availability and accessibility of relevant information regarding governance, rights, and responsibilities. This variable plays a crucial role in empowering citizens to participate effectively in governance by informing them about their rights and the mechanisms through which they can engage with governing bodies.

1.9 Conceptual framework

Figure : Showing the conceptual framework



Source: Researcher, 2024

The conceptual framework for the study on citizens' participation in governance in Puntland State, Somalia, delineates the relationships between three independent variables (IV), a dependent variable (DV), and intervening variables that collectively shape civic engagement.

The first independent variable, clan affiliation, emphasizes the significant role that clan identity, unity, and leadership influence play in determining how individuals engage with governance. Clan identity fosters a sense of belonging that can motivate participation, while clan unity can enhance collective action in governance. Additionally, the influence of clan leaders can either encourage or discourage members from engaging in formal governance processes. The second independent variable, traditional governance structures, encompasses the mechanisms through which communities govern themselves outside formal governmental systems. This includes the role of elder councils, which serve as vital decision-making bodies, and customary laws that guide community behavior and expectations. Furthermore, traditional conflict resolution mechanisms can affect participation by either facilitating community engagement or perpetuating divisions that hinder collective action. The third independent variable, governmental legitimacy and accountability, focuses on how citizens perceive the legitimacy of governmental authorities and their accountability to the public. Perceived legitimacy influences citizens' willingness to participate, while effective accountability mechanisms promote transparency and responsiveness, thereby enhancing public trust in governance institutions.

The dependent variable, citizens' participation in governance, is assessed through indicators such as voting behavior, community mobilization, and advocacy efforts. These dimensions reflect the various ways individuals engage with governance processes and decision-making. However the intervening variables, including government policy, economic status, and access to information, further contextualize the relationships within the framework. These factors can significantly influence both the independent variables and the dependent variable, impacting overall participation levels.

By integrating these elements, the conceptual framework provides a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics influencing citizens' participation in governance in Puntland State, highlighting the interplay between cultural, traditional, and institutional factors.

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