

# Tanzania General Election 2015: Dynamics of Political Campaign's in Determining Voting Preferences

Dr. Mwidima Peter Charles

St Augustine University of Tanzania, Mwanza, Tanzania

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**Abstract:** The focus of this study was to collectively determine the contributions or influence of the dynamics (*the use of ethnicity, religion, money, and personalized communication*) of political campaign's in determining voting preferences in Tanzania. Specifically, the study aimed at determining the most influencing factors (ethnicity, religion, money, and personalized communication) in the voting preferences among voters in Tanzania as well as the least influencing factors. The study used the 2015 election campaign in Tanzania as a case study. To explore this, four (4) focus group (FGD) discussions were done from the two districts of Ilemela and Nyamagana in Mwanza City, Tanzania. A total of 32 informants were involved in the focus group discussions. A purposive sampling technique was used to select the informants. The findings reveal that the use of opinion leaders during election campaigns in Tanzania has more influence than any other factors listed above. It was followed by personalised communications. Likewise, the use of money, religion, and ethnicity during the election campaigns in Tanzania had the least influence in the voting preferences or decisions among voters during voting decisions in Tanzanian elections.

**Keywords:** Dynamics of Political Campaigns, opinion leaders, personalised communication, religion, ethnicity, money.

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## 1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Election campaigns are opportunities for voters to attain valuable information that can help them make informed choices (Bartels 1996). Usually, during election campaigns, political parties compete to inform voters about their candidates, the issues, and where they stand on these issues. In that sense, election campaigns can be viewed as a particular kind of information campaign which aims at informing prospective voters about political manifestoes and or promises (Nadeau, 2001).

The 2015 Tanzanian general election marked 23 years of democracy in Tanzania, which included five national and local government elections since 1992 when multi-party system was introduced in the country. The 2015 election was held to elect the president of the united republic of Tanzania, the president of Zanzibar, Members of Parliaments and ward counsellors from both Tanzanian mainland and Tanzania Zanzibar.

It should be noted that Tanzania is a state which was established after the union of two independent countries of Tanganyika and Zanzibar which united in 1964 to form the united republic of Tanzania or simply Tanzania. Thus, the country is comprised of two governments; one is the union government, which rules Tanzania mainland and administers union affairs, as determined by the constitution, and two is the revolutionary government of Zanzibar which is only responsible for their own matters.

## 2. TANZANIA GENERAL ELECTIONS

Tanzania has had five general elections since the abolition of a single party system and the introduction of multiparty election in 1992. The first election to be held under multiparty system in Tanzania was held in October 1995 whereby the CCM candidate Benjamin William Mkapa was elected as president (61.8%), beating his opponents Augustine Lyatonga Mrema of NCCR, Mr Freeman Mbowe of CHADEMA, and Professor Ibrahim Lipumba of CUF.

In October 2000 the second election was held, Benjamin Mkapa once again led the ruling party (CCM) as their flag bearer. The opposition parties were led by Professor Ibrahim Lipumba (CUF), Freeman Mbowe (CHADEMA), John Cheyo (UDP) and other parties. The ruling party CCM once again maintained its dominance, with President Mkapa being re-elected with 71.7% of the vote and the CCM retaining a substantial majority in Parliament.

The third election to be held in Tanzania during multiparty system was in 2005. The 2005 election involved several political parties including the ruling party (CCM), and the opposition parties such as CHADEMA, CUF, TLP, NCCR and other parties. The ruling party was led by Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete as their presidential candidate, whereas the main opposition party by then CUF was represented by Professor Ibrahim Lipumba. Just like in the previous two elections, the ruling party CCM with its new presidential candidate Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete won the election after harvesting a total 9,102,952 (80.24%) votes in total, he was followed by Professor Ibrahim Lipumba of CUF with 1,327,125 (11.7%) votes, then the other parties which followed were CHADEMA, TLP, NCCR-Mageuzi, DP, NLD, Makini, and SAU (European Union Report, 2010).

The fourth election under multiparty system in the country was held in November 2010 whereby Jakaya Kikwete who was the incumbent once again carried the flag of the ruling party CCM. The opposition parties were also led by Dr. Wilbrod Slaa (CHADEMA), Professor Ibrahim Lipumba (CUF) and other parties. In that election, Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete of CCM was re-elected as president of the united republic of Tanzania.

The 2015 general election was the fifth election to be held in Tanzania under multiparty election. The dominant party CCM chose the former minister of works John Pombe Magufuli as their flag bearer after a tough competition among other prominent candidates such as the former Prime Minister Edward Lowassa who was eliminated at an early stage. The exclusion at an early stage of leading candidate Edward Lowassa led to the defection of Lowassa to the opposition wing of UKAWA and his prompt nomination as UKAWA'S candidate for president, officially running as the candidate of CHADEMA. Lowassa's decision also led to the defection of other CCM figures to Ukawa, including another former Prime Minister Fredrick Sumaye and other senior politicians such as Ngobale Mwiru who is the co-founder of the dominant party CCM. In addition to CCM and CHADEMA, a further six political parties put forward candidates for president of the republic. After the election, John Magufuli of CCM emerged a winner after garnering a total of 8,882,935 votes (58.46%) whereas his close opponent Edward Lowassa of UKAWA got 6,072,848 votes (39.97%).

### **Election Campaigns in Tanzania:**

According to the Nation Election Commission (NEC) of Tanzania (1995), election campaigns in Tanzania are conducted by the respective political parties and their candidates. However, with the consent of the respective candidate, a political party or an agent may also conduct election campaigns on behalf of the candidate. In Tanzanian experiences, election campaigns usually involve diverse techniques such as the use of political rallies or meetings, house to house campaign, media, billboards and posters to articulate their policies.

In political rallies, candidates have the opportunities to sale their policies to the voters; they usually use option leaders such as musicians, comedians, retired officials, businessmen and others to help them in the campaigns. The house to house campaign technique involve candidates or their agents who go around at every household to seek for votes, in the process, such agents do give some soaps, sugar, caps, t-shirts and other gifts with the purpose of influencing the voters.

According to the National Election Commission (2010) of Tanzania, the campaign period begins one day after nomination of candidates from the respective political parties and ends one day before the election day, thus, the 2015 general election campaigns begun immediately after the nomination of such candidates on 22<sup>nd</sup> August, 2015 and ended on the 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2015. In response to sections 40 – 43 of the presidential and parliamentary regulations of 2015, and sections 35 – 37 of the councillor's (elections) regulations of 2015, political parties which had candidates vying for various posts in the

general election were required to provide their tentative campaign timetable to the Electoral Commission for co-ordination during the campaign period.

The coordination of the presidential election campaigns comprised representatives from political parties with candidates vying for the presidential seat. This committee had a duty to review the proposed timetables submitted to it, for the purposes of co-ordinating the official timetable. For the case of parliamentary and councillors' coordination, political parties which had candidates were required to submit their proposed campaign timetables to the returning officers and assistant returning officers in their respective constituencies and wards, seven days before nomination.

In addition to that, in order to maintain fairness between political parties during the 2015 elections campaign, candidates were required to abide and adhere to the elections expenses Act No. 6 of 2010 and 2015 electoral code of conducts. The Act No. 6 of 2010 intends among other things, to control excessive use of funds in election activities. The law requires transparency in the sources of income, expenditure, contributions and it also provides ceilings on the amount of money to be spent during Elections. This is to prohibit corrupt practices within political parties and in elections. The registrar of political parties is responsible for the enforcement of this law.

#### **Statement of the problem:**

The main purpose of any election campaign in political positions is to pursued voters towards a given candidate or political party. During election campaigns, politicians and or political parties use diverse techniques and approaches in order to win the battle. For example, the 2015 general election campaign in Tanzania was characterized by the usage of numerous techniques by the respective political parties and candidates. Among the most used techniques were the campaigns based on ethnicity and religion setups. Others were the use of opinion leaders such as musicians, comedians, businessmen, teachers, retired officials and many others. Likewise, the use of money politics was also witnessed whereby during the campaign, politicians distributed sugar, salt, caps, mobile phones, alcohol, match boxes, t-shirts and many others (Mtanzania, 2015). Moreover, the use of personalized communication was commonly used by majority of politicians and their supporters. The personalised communication mode of campaigns involved interpersonal communications and sometimes group communication whereby politicians, their agents and or supporters used mobile texts, calls, Whatsap, Facebook, and Vibes or sometimes they visited prospective voters at their home places or workplaces. Following the use of such diverse campaign techniques during the 2015 election in Tanzania, this study therefore focused at assessing the contribution of each of the used technique in determining the voting preferences amongst voters in Tanzania as well as their voting behaviours.

#### **Research question:**

*How did the use of ethnicity, religion, money, and personalized communication in the 2015 election campaigns in Tanzania impact voters in their voting preferences?*

#### **Specific questions:**

- i. What was the most influencing factor (ethnicity, religion, money, and personalized communication) in the voting preferences among voters in Tanzania? and
- ii. Which one of them (ethnicity, religion, money, and personalized communication i) had the least influence?

### **3. LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **The influence of money in elections:**

Money or money politics has been highlighted to be one of the major influencing factors during elections, specifically during voting preference where voters cast their votes to the candidates who gives them some money, promises, gifts, or some other incentives. According to Burkhanlter (1997), Ginsberg (2009) money has a great influence during political campaigns and elections where voters make their decisions basing or relying on the money or gifts they received from candidates. Money is one of the major determining factors which most of Indian voters rely on during voting process (Hazarak, 2015). Other factors (such as media framing or audience framing) do not have significant influence on the audience voting preferences although it might be possibly for some people to take the money (because it is given in a voluntary manner) and still they can vote for a different candidate of their choices.

The United States of American is one of the countries where studies have affirmed that money politics during elections is a very common influencing factor among voters' voting preferences. Whatman (2009) states that during election campaigns and voting stage in US, candidate use huge amount of money to influence voting preference among voters. He says, in 1998 election for example, during the presidential campaign, the candidates vying for the Republican and Democratic nominations raised almost one billion dollars which later on was used for their goals, and some was used to influence voters.

Moreover, Frederick & Streb (2010) confirms that money or corruption during campaign period was one of the major factors for voting preferences among voters. Frederick & Streb explains that corruption especially giving money to voters has major influence in the voting preferences. This is because; voters who are given money or promised to be given money normally tend to be loyal to the candidate who gave him/her some money. Frederick & Streb (2010) adds that during election campaigns, candidates use a lot of resources, including money to be voted for. To support the persistence of the influence of money in political voting preferences or voting behaviour among voters, Bakari (2012) writes that it is very difficult to forget that politics is mostly about money, and who gets it, and that true influence and authority belong to those with power to apportion. This simply implies that those with money are always likely to influence voters' voting preferences while those without it, will always continue losing in election.

Hiatt (1998) also confirms the influence of money in voting preferences process among voters. Hiatt says that in the past years, candidates were voted because of their qualities and not because of money like now days. Hiatt (1998) writes that democracy seemed to work better in the 1950s when he was growing up, it allowed candidates of high competence and conscience to rise to the highest level of government. They were elected on a level field by citizens, whose votes counted equally, but today, politics has become an arm's race – but with money, candidates are forced to give money to win elections. Babeiya (2011) asserts that participating in election campaigns involves committing a lot of resources, including money and other resources. Babeiya says that candidates usually get well prepared financially as it is very common that it is only money which can help them get some voters especially who are committed to money for them to cast their votes.

In the African perspective, the issue of money in politics is not quite different from the first world countries, the only difference might be the sum of money and other benefits that candidates give or promise to give after they are being elected (Babeiya, 2011). Taking an example of countries like Tanzania, money is very common in the country during elections. In most cases, politicians in Tanzania use money and other resources which they provide money to the voters so that they can support them in the voting process. Babeiya (2011) confirms that apart from giving money to voters, the political parties in Tanzania also provides some items such as cloths, t-shirts, mobile phones, and caps which have succeeded to influence many voters especially those from the low level income class who are normally lured by such gifts to cast their votes to the respective candidates. Referring to the previous elections in Tanzania, Babeiya (2011) affirms that money in Tanzania's elections is becoming a normal practice whereby those who have it have always enjoyed the chance of winning the elections whereas those who do not have it or merely do not give it out, they have always suffered the pains of losing in elections. In summary, the current literatures have been able to demonstrate how money politics influence the voting preferences amongst voters. It is noted that the influence of money is not only practiced in the developing countries but it is also reported in the developed countries like the US. This indicates that money dose not only influence voters in the third world countries but it influences even voters in the first world countries.

#### **The role of Ethnicity in elections:**

According to Yearley & Bruce (2006), ethnicity or ethnic group refers to a group on the scale of a person or a nation; the members which claim descend from common ancestors and are usually united by common language, religion, culture and history. According to Gabsa (2004), ethnicity is a particular way of life of a given group of people that basically distinguish them from another types or class of people whether within the same territory or beyond. Gabsa says, cultures, language, and sometimes physical appearance are some of the defining features of an ethnic group.

Ethnicity during political elections has been reported in diverse countries across the world. In the US elections, most of the voters cast their votes basing on the ethnicity grounds especially colour identity (Suhay, 2008). In 2008 when Americans in Chicago were voting for their Mayor, the blacks were noted to have voted for the blacks while the whites

casted their votes to the white candidate (Gabriela, 2005). Gabriela says, in US the issue of ethnicity, specifically based on race is very high especially during political competitions among candidates. Race voting for states like California is very common, and class identity is used as a major predictor of the strength of race voting. That is, the higher the white voters' class the less likely they are to vote for a Latino, likewise, the Latino in California also vote for Latino candidates.

In Nigeria, ethnicity determines the choices of voters and voters' decisions in electioneering (Nnabuihe, Aghemalo & Okebugwa, 2014, Adebayo, 2016). Strong evidence has been affirmed by studies about the essence and influence of ethnicity in voting preferences among dominant ethnic groups in Nigeria (Romero, 2008). Iwuji (1998) points out that the political party like NPC in Nigeria, and other parties in the country have ethnicity objectives especially in the southern party of the country. The NCNC is a typical Ibo [ethnic group] political party, thus, the Ibo have always been voting for the party than other parties. Attempts to form nationally integrative political parties at the dawn of electoral politics in Nigeria has failed, instead, patterns of ethnic politics has continued, exemplified by ethno-regional political parties, ethnic mobilization as well as ethnic voting (Adegboyega, 2006, William, 2011).

The politics of ethnicity has also been reported in Russian's politics. It is reported that Russian politics is influenced by ethnic classes. During election campaigns and voting preferences are mostly done based on the ethnicity factors (Bremmer, 1994). This trend has led to the emergency of class formation in the Russia government whereby the minority ethnic groups have always been the looser in elections because of their small number. According to Bremmer (1994), the majority ethnic groups in Russia have dominated the government top positions than the minority ethnic groups because of the advantages of attracting more votes from their own ethnic groups who are many in the country. Bremmer says, the politics of exclusion typically is found at the state level especially to the elected positions who won the election based on their ethnic group being the majority in the country.

In Zimbabwe, ethnicity has also been exceedingly noticeable during elections and voting preferences among voters whereby most of voters prefer using ethnicity criteria in their voting (Dewa, 2009). The major ethnic groups in Zimbabwe are mainly based on race and somewhat to ethnicity. In 2008 presidential election, most of the Matebele ethnic voters voted for ZAPU Which is considered to be supported by this ethnic group, whereas ZANU (supported by the Shona ethnic group) got majority seats in the Shona area (Dewa, 2009).

Likewise, Brazil is also not left behind with the politics of ethnicity. Voting preferences among voters in Brazil is greatly influenced by ethnicity grounds of voters in relation to the candidates or political parties (Powell, 2011). Powell says that the Afro-Brazilian population is over 75 percentages while the black or Preto Brazilian represent a socioeconomically and politically marginal minority, thus, during elections voting, the majority ethnic group have normally been winning the elections.

In Cameroun, ethnicity during election and voting preferences is also noted to have significantly been one of the major factors used by voters to vote for candidates (Gabsa, 2004). Most of the voters in Cameroun are driven by their ethnicity grounds whereby the majority ethnic groups have always been taking most of the top political positions in the country, while the minority group have also been trying to collude among themselves in order to win elections. The issue of ethnicity in Kenyans' elections is relatively diverse from other countries. During election period, the voting of prospective voters is mainly driven by ethnicity factor (Beyene, 2012). During the 2007 election in Kenya, ethnicity was highly pronounced in the country. Voters across ethnic groups in the country motivated themselves to unite together in supporting candidates from their own ethnic groups. The media too was not left behind whereby journalists and reporters fuelled and encouraged voters from some ethnic groups to vote for candidates from their ethnic group (Krutz, 2009).

In the rift valley province, the media targeted the non-Kallenjins [ethnic group] who were living in the rift valley against the Kikuyu [ethnic group]. The Kikuyu language radio stations Inoro FM and Kamene FM often encouraged voters to vote for candidates from their own ethnic group (Kikuyu). They also broadcast songs with demeaning language about the "beast" from the western party of the country, these were the Kallenjin and the Luo ethnic groups (Krutz, 2009). In areas where the Luo [ethnic group] are the majority, the media continued to mobilize voters to cast their votes to their own ethnic group who were the Luo (Mwangi & Frank, 2009). The Luo language radio station Victoria FM decried what is called the leadership of "Baboons", referring to Kibaki (candidate) and his co-ethnics (Krutz, 2009).

In electoral competition in Kenya, ethnicity is pushed by political elites in order to gather huge number of voters to make sure that they win the election and get access to national resources (Mwangi, 2009). This implies that every ethnic group in Kenya is mobilized to vote for candidates from their ethnic grounds so that the resources from their area are not benefitted by a non-ethnic person. In South Africa, the voting preference among voters is normally based on the color [race] of candidates. Africans normally vote for one set of parties (led by an African candidate), the whites too vote for different set of parties with white candidates, with few exceptions, there is no crossover voting between the blacks and whites (Feree, 2011).

In Namibia, there is very high rate of ethnicity in the political process especially during election and voting periods (Bakari, 2010, Beyene, 2012). Majority of the ethnic groups have always been elected during elections. There is still a growing alienation of the minority groups from the central part of Namibia where a single ethnic group (Ovambo ethnic group) dominates other minor groups (Bakari, 2010). For the case of Tanzania, the northern part of Tanzania (Arusha, Tanga, and Kilimanjaro regions), the politics of ethnicity is highly pronounced among individuals who are reported to have been so ethnicity in their voting preferences, they normally prefer voting for candidates from their areas (Whitehead, 2009). Summarily, the present literatures have showed us how ethnicity influences the voting preferences amongst voters across the world. The discussed literature have verified and presented the major two classes of ethnicity which is practiced during election. The first class of ethnicity is the one which involves people of similar race (for example black), and the second class is the one which involves different races (the whites and black). Voters from similar race normally are influenced by their own small/majority ethnic groups while voter from the class which involve race normally are influenced by their color (race).

#### **Religion and politics:**

Religion is a social phenomenon that consists of beliefs, actions, and institutions which assume the existence of supernatural power or entities with powers of action or impersonal power or processes possessed of moral purpose (Yearley & Bruce, 2006). According to Down (2003), religious involvement in politics is often more powerful predictor of political actions (including voting) and attitudes than any other factors such as age, gender, education, or income. Religion has been used by both politicians and their supporters during elections whereby most of the prospective voters prefer to vote for candidates from their own religion (Manza, 1997). Religion and party choices are also reported to have been considered to be as one of the determinants for voting choices in Europe whereby voting preferences is also being driven by religion grounds (De Vree, 2009). Religion in Canada has been found to be one of the strongest vote determinants in Canadian voting behaviour whereby the Catholic voters tend to vote for disproportionately for the liberal party (Stephenson, 2010).

In India, voting preferences among voters is reported to have been influenced by religion. The existence of some political parties in India and neo-political groups are linked to particular religion, candidates do not hesitate to seek voters by playing religious cards with co-religious voters (Hazarak, 2015). Likewise, the influence of religion in voting preferences was also noticed during the 2013 presidential election in Kenya whereby some voters were noted to have preferred using religion in their voting preferences (Wafula, 2014). According to Dowd (2003), religious leaders have more influence than the media in encouraging political actions among their followers that are conducive to democracy in more religiously diverse setting than less religious setting.

In the first world countries like the United State of America where the Roman Catholic are reported to have significant influence in the US politics especially during election period, the church has been one of the influencing players towards voting preference among the US voters (Smith, 2003). According to Smith (2003), the political attitudes and voting preferences in the US among the Roman Catholic is significantly influenced by the messages emanating from their Parish Priests. Tanzania is also one of the countries where religion has been closely attached with politics especially during the last election in 2010 where the election campaigns were dominated by religion elements (TEMCO, 2011). According to Bakari (2012), religious divisions are increasingly shaping electoral behaviour in Tanzania. Bakari says, in the 2010 general elation in Tanzania, religion was observed at all key stages of the election process staring from the nomination process within political parties (at the primaries level) where voting was influenced by religion grounds. Briefly, the current literature have been able to demonstrate that religion is one among other factors which can determine the voting preferences among voters in political election, this factor, as noted in the discussions, appear to be visible in many countries across the world.

**The use of Personalized Communication in election campaigns:**

Personalized communication is the process of message transaction among people who work towards creating a sustaining shared meaning. This type of communication play a significant influence in the voting preferences among voters, this is because of the opportunities of the interaction among voters who normally share political information about the candidates (Hilliard, 2011). Personalized communication during election allows people to share information about the candidates through various ways such as mobile text messages. This mode of interaction plays great influence in the voting preferences among voters because the types of messages communicated amongst prospective voters includes both positive and negative messages (Carvalho, 2008). Sometimes the personalized communication is done by candidates themselves. During election period, candidates do involve themselves in sending text messages to prospective voters appealing them to vote for them, and sometimes they do visit prospective voters' home places (Hilliard, 2011).

In 2008 Congress election in the US, more than 40% of the population were confirmed to be contacted in person by individuals and volunteers from the respective political parties (Nielson, 2010). According to Carvalho (2008), when prospective voters are contacted or visited directly by candidates in their home areas or workplaces, they normally prefer to vote for those candidates who paid them a visit. Moreover, since political campaigns involves competitions, candidates find it imperative to involve voters in more personal interactions with voters because they believe that the presence of a candidate is persuasive in a way that well-crafted messages alone are not, or that the candidate's presence on the voter's doorstep draws attention to the campaign's message, and it is the message that persuades voters' voting preferences (Jared, Marco & Petrie, 2011). Likewise, politicians or their representatives prefer using diversity of approaches to influence the electorates, including direct mail, automated calls and radio ads to expose voters to a candidate's political position (even in smaller races), personalized face-to-face interaction is still considered the most effective way to campaign approaches in many countries.

In Tanzania, during the 2010 election in the country, personalized communication was one of the major techniques applied by the political parties to influence voting preferences among voters. According to TEMCO (2010), this approach was mainly done by politicians themselves and or their representatives who moved around homes, working places, and religious buildings seeking people to vote for them. Another approach which was even fixed in the manifestos of some political parties, appealed all fans, and members of those parties across the country to make sure that they go around in every house of voters to seek votes for their candidates, The approach was advocated using a slogan of: "door to door", "person to person", "bed to bed" bed-sheet to bed-sheet" campaign (TEMCO, 2010). Concisely, as noted in this segmentation, there are some voters who prefer using the information they have gotten from their personalized communication with colleagues and or the physical contacts done by politicians or their agents. Thus, it can be noted that some voters tend to have more trust on the information they get from this mode of communication in their voting preferences.

**Opinion Leaders and Election Campaigns:**

Opinion leaders are persons who have an ability to influence other's decision making about uncertainty or any state of affairs (Bakari, 2012). Opinion leadership is a process by which some individuals employ an inconsistent aggregate of influence on the conduct of others in some given theme areas (Ayeotoro, 2016). Ayeotoro suggests that opinion leadership is to be viewed as a continuous variable even through it is excessively focused in a few individuals for a given topic area. It is somebody whose opinions are extremely appreciated and used by the respondents to help in making decisions across a variety of situations such as what types of clothes to wear, where to have major household items repaired, how to discipline the children and for whom to vote in political elections (Cosmas, 2012). This person can be somebody through whom the respondents have personal acquaintances (a friend, priest, member of social group, relative, or someone in public life whose advice is derived from his/her public statements. The characteristics of an opinion leader as pointed out by Harris, Botten & McColl (2008) include; knowledgeable about the subject matter, they have more confidence on the issue, usually they have higher level of education as compared to the recipients of the information, and they have higher income, higher occupational status, and many others. The influence of opinion leaders during elections and voting preferences among voters has been reported to be one of the major factors. It is reported (Anderson, 2008), during political campaigns, most of the politicians and political parties normally prefer to contact and involve some influential people in society who would be able to influence prospective voters. Opinion leaders are the filters or mediators through

which persuasive messages from various sources is transferred to the voters with the intention of influencing them to vote for the candidates of their choices (Rebecca, 2005).

According to Anderson (2008), opinion leaders are seen to have more influence than the media for a number of reasons; they are seen as trustworthy and non-purposive people in society whom normally voters tend to rely on during election times. Moreover, Rebecca (2005) explains that when opinion leaders talk to the people that they are close to, those people are likely to be influenced or persuaded by them especially in their voting preferences. The opinion leaders normally gather much persuasion information about the candidates and they use such information to influence voters. Chandrasekara (2014) also confirms the influence of the opinion leaders in voting preferences among voters. In his qualitative research done on the first time voters in Sri-Lanka, he affirms that opinion leaders had significant influence among voters. This is because most of the voters relied much on the opinion to make their voting preferences in the voting process. What can be summarized from this segmentation is that the current literature has been able to demonstrate how opinion leaders are very essential players during election and voting among voters. The existing literatures show us that voting preferences among voters can be determined by the presence of the opinion leaders who normally use their popularity to influence voters' voting preferences.

#### 4. RESEARCH METHODS

In order to critically explore the impacts or influence of ethnicity, religion, opinion leaders, and personalized communication used during the 2015 election campaign in Tanzania, four (4) Focus Group Discussions were utilized from two (2) districts of Ilemela and Nyamagana in Mwanza region. The focus group discussions were projected to trap the in-depth feelings and or explanations of the voters on whether the use of ethnicity, personalised communications, religion, money and opinion leaders during the 2015 election in Tanzania had any impacts in their voting decisions. A purposive sampling procedure was employed in getting the focus group informants for this study, thus, a total of 32 informants were involved in the focus group discussion sessions. Patton (2002) considers that all sampling in qualitative research is purposeful. Purposive sampling is a typical choice in qualitative research (Marshall 1996, Bryman 2008). Purposive sampling recruits participants that are relevant to the research questions (Bryman 2008). The focus group informants were selected from the two political parties of CCM and CHADEMA. These were supporters and active members of the two main political parties, thus, grassroots leaders from the two political parties who had all names of their members were involved in getting the informants. According to Hennink (2014), participants of a focus group discussion must have similar backgrounds or share similar experience of an illness, multiple births, divorce, or any other similar elements. Each of the four FGD comprised between six (6) to twelve (12) informants.

The venues for the discussions were arranged by the party leaders in the respective constituencies, and all the discussions were done between 15:00 pm to 18:00 hours. This was caused by the fact that the first two discussions which were scheduled to be done in morning hours could not be attended by reasonable number of informants. Thus, evening hours was preferred suitable because that was the time most of the informants had returned from other responsibilities. Initially, before the commencement of the discussions, informants in every group were requested to introduce themselves so as to familiarize among themselves and the moderator in respectively. Thereafter, they were requested to register themselves in an attendance sheet whereby the moderator was able to get their basic demographic characteristics (Table 1 and 2).

**Table 1 Demographic Characteristic of Informants – Ilemela district**

S/N	Participant Code	Age	Sex	Marital Status	Education	Party Affiliation
1	MT	39	M	Married	Primary School	CHADEMA
2	DB	41	M	Married	Form four	CCM
3	AB	48	M	Married	Form four	CHADEMA
4	AH	29	F	Married	Primary School	CCM
5	MR	23	F	Single	Primary School	CCM
6	IS	55	F	Married	Form four	CCM
7	RK	67	M	Married	Form four	CHADEMA
8	LL	61	M	Married	Diploma	CCM
9	MS	53	F	Married	Form six	CCM



10	MR	49	F	Divorced	Form four	CHADEMA
11	DL	47	M	Married	Form four	CCM
12	CB	19	F	Married	Degree	CCM
13	MM	21	F	Single	Form four	CHADEMA
14	AH	19	F	Single	Form six	CCM
15	MK	53	M	Widow	Diploma	CHADEMA
16	MT2	39	M	Married	Diploma	CHADEMA

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Informants – Nyamagana district

S/N	Participant Code	Age	Sex	Marital Status	Education	Party Affiliation
1	EM	76	M	Married	Primary School	CHADEMA
2	OP	44	M	Married	Diploma	CHADEMA
3	AC	42	M	Married	Diploma	CCM
4	MT2	37	M	Married	Degree	CCM
5	MS2	22	M	single	Form four	CCM
6	YL	70	F	Widow	Degree	CHADEMA
7	SL	40	F	Married	Primary school	CCM
8	EW	33	M	Married	Primary school	CHADEMA
9	SM	34	M	Married	Primary school	CCM
10	DR	20	F	Single	Primary school	CHADEMA
11	LD	32	F	Married	Primary school	CCM
12	JM	35	M	Married	Degree	CHADEMA
13	J	65	M	Widow	Primary school	CCM
14	JJ	43	M	Married	Masters	CHADEMA
15	AB	35	F	Single	Primly school	CCM
16	EJ	30	F	Married	Primary school	CHADEMA

As shown in tables 1 & 2, informants in the focus group discussions comprised of people of different age groups, gender, and education backgrounds. The age groups of participants ranged from 18 years to 76 years respectively; including both women (14 women) and men (18 women). During the discussions, the moderator used a tape recorder to record the whole discussions. Besides that, note taking was simultaneously used in the process. Highlighters were used to spot all required information and specific quotes that seemed relevant, important and of interest to the study. The discussions were transcribed by the moderator himself by listening to the tape recorder vis-à-vis reconciling with the information taken in the note book. Thereafter, the data were categorized, coded and assigned relevant themes basing on ethnicity, religion, personalized communication and opinion leaders.

## 5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Research question ONE:

*What was the most influencing factor (ethnicity, religion, money, and personalized communication) in the voting preferences among voters in the 2015 election in Tanzania?*

The findings reveal that the use of opinion leaders (*musicians, businessmen, comedians, actors/actresses, teachers, religion leaders, and retired officials*) during election campaigns in Tanzania has more influence in the voting decisions among voters compared to other factors (*such as ethnicity, religion, personalized communication, and money*). In other words, the best way to predict the voting behaviours and or wining an election in Tanzania depends on how much a political party or candidate use opinion leaders in the election campaigns.

However, the results display that both males and females in Tanzania appeared to be equally influenced by opinion leaders though males somehow ranked higher (52%) than females (47.9%). Furthermore, the education level of respondents regarding the influence of opinion leaders seemed to have some differences in their voting preferences. The finding informs us that respondents with secondary school education appeared to be more influenced by opinion leaders

compared to those with other level of education. For example, those with higher education such as degree and above were found to be less influenced by opinion leaders than those with other education level. It is likely that individuals with low level of education such secondary schools or primary schools had somewhat enclosed minds, that is, they were unable to think beyond their reach, whereas those with higher education might have utilized well the advantages of the education to think beyond the box. It also appears that individuals who were degree holders or above were able to negotiate with the exposure of the opinion leaders than those with low level of education, or simply they seem to have had wide acquaintance and understanding of issues regarding an election while those with secondary school education seem to have minimal level of understanding of issues concerning election process.

It was revealed that individuals who aged between 18-29 years were more influenced by opinion leaders than those whose age was 42 years and above. One of the possible reason for this age difference could be that the young generations seemed to be more inflamed by opinion leaders because of their immature minds compared to the aged individuals who are matured enough to have an independent voting preferences.



**Figure 1: Opinion Leaders in one of the 2015 campaigns (Source: authors' construct)**

Majority of informants confirmed that they would vote for the political party which appear to be supported by the renowned opinion leaders in the country. *Figure (1)* above shows a group picture of the country's renowned opinion leaders (musicians, comedians, actors/actresses, retired officials) who were all campaigning for the dominant party CCM which was later on declared winner of the 2015 election. Apart from entertaining the prospective voters, such opinion leaders played a great role in advertising the manifesto of the dominant party CCM whereby they appealed all their supporters and or fans to vote for CCM candidates. Therefore, what can be summarized in this section is that the use of opinion leaders during the 2015 election in Tanzania had a significant influence on the voting preferences amongst voters compared to other factors.

The findings also revealed that personalized communication somewhat had significant influence in the voting preferences among voters in the 2015 election in Tanzania after opinion leaders. A significant number of informants agreed that they would be influenced by the text messages sent to them by friends, relatives, colleagues, and politicians through mobile phones, Messenger, Whatsapp and Facebook. Apart from text messages, informants said that they appreciated to be contacted directly by politicians and or their agents who physically visited them at their home places and or workplaces with a purpose of asking for votes. This mode of personalised communication was considered to have brought a close relationship and friendship between prospective voters and politicians and or their agents who visited them, thus, it greatly made them loyal in the voting preferences. To bear witness on this, the words of the underneath informant represents the words of majority of other informants:

*Ms. MM, (a form four leaver, 21 years old) said, "They have been using so many ways to contact us, sometimes they use the Communication Companies such as Vodacom Company to send us text messages appealing us to vote for a certain candidate. For example, it is just yesterday when Vodacom sent me this message; [she displayed the message] "ndugu mpiga kura mtarajiwa kumbuka kumpigia kura ndugu Magufuli ifikapo tar 25/10/2015, tuma ujumbe huu kwa watu 10 zaidi" [dear prospective voter, remember to vote for Magufuli on 25<sup>th</sup> October, forward this message to 10 more people."]*

The results reveal that males appeared to be more influenced by personalized communication compared to their counterparty females. The findings show that majority of male informants (58.7%) admitted that they would be influenced by the personalized communication in their voting preferences compared to female informants (41.3%). The finding further revealed that informants with secondary school education appeared to be somewhat more influenced (51%) by personalized communication compared to those with other level of education. Likewise, the finding also suggests that the age difference of respondents could have played a difference in their being influenced by personalized communication. It was revealed that informants who aged between 18-29 years were somewhat more likely to be influenced by personalized communication compared to those whose ages were 30 years and above. One of the likely reasons for this difference could be that the young generation might have had different desires and expectations which perhaps might have been clearly addressed in the personalized communication.

#### **Research Question Two:**

*Which one of the factors (ethnicity, religion, money, and personalized communication) had the least influence in the voting preferences?*

The findings reveal that money had the least influence in the voting preferences among voters in Tanzania; it was followed by ethnicity and religion. A significant number of informants in all the focus group discussions said that they would not be influenced by money (*including salt, sugar, match box, t-shirts, caps, etc.*) given by politicians during the election campaign. Initially, it was established by majority of informants that they received different offers and free gifts from politicians during the 2015 election campaign in Tanzania but they resisted that they would not be influenced by such offers or gifts.

Overall, these findings are surprising and give the impression to differ from previous studies. For example: Burkhan (1997), and Ginsberg (2009) have stated that money has a great influence during political campaigns and elections where voters make their decisions basing or relying on the money or gifts they received from candidates. One of the major factors noted during the focus group discussions was that prospective voters who were supporters or active members of certain political parties remained loyal to their political parties despite receiving free gifts from other political parties. In other words, however how much money or free gifts a prospective voter received during the 2015 election campaign in Tanzania, such prospective voters still retained their votes to the political party they were affiliated with. As previous stated, ethnicity and religion had some minimal influence in the voting preferences among voters in Tanzania. It was noted during the focus group discussions that some informants said that they would be influenced by neither ethnicity nor religion in their voting preferences. It was observed that ethnicity and religion were superseded by other factors such as the emotions (*love or hatred*) of voters towards political parties and or candidates and their prior knowledge information towards the respective parties or candidates. This is because, during the focus group discussions, an overwhelming number of informants said that they would vote for a party or candidate whom they love mostly.

Likewise, they said that they will judge the candidates basing on their pre-existing knowledge of such candidates and not basing on their ethnicity or religion backgrounds. One of the implications of these findings is that people in Tanzania don't vote for a candidate because of his or their ethnic or religion backgrounds, instead, if a candidate is well established and is liked or being loved by majority of the prospective voters, such a candidate is likely to win the race compared to a candidate who is neither well established nor liked by the prospective voters. Thus, neither ethnicity nor religion setups would affect the decisions of such prospective voters.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The overall findings from this study may be surprising to the many readers. They present novelty findings which appear to have not been reported by majority of the previous studies. Majority of the previous studies have insisted that the use of money (Frederick, 2010, Hazara, 2015), religion (Yearley & Bruce, 2006, Stephenson, 2010), ethnicity (Gabsa, 2004, Adebayo, 2016), personalised communication (Carvalho, 2008, Hilliard, 2011) during election campaigns have great

impact in influencing the voting decisions among voters, on contrary, the present study has challenged such factors as to have been overwhelm by the use of opinion leaders. Somewhat, the use of personalised communication during election campaigns in Tanzania also plays some role in influencing the voting preferences among voters in the country. It is unexpectedly that the use of money, religion, and ethnicity during election campaigns in Tanzania do not have direct influence in the voting preferences among voters. Lastly, the finishing of this study informs us that the voting preferences among voters depends on so many factors, thus, it is very difficult to predict the voting behaviour of voters by merely looking into one or two factors as previous studies have done. Thus, in order to correctly predict the voting behaviours among voters in a given country it is suitable to look into diverse factors collectively as this study has done.

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