



Influence of the legal support system of local authorities towards effective local government: A case of Arusha District Council, Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the significance of a good legal support system towards effective governance in local councils, with the Arusha District Council serving as a case study. Institutional theory guided the research, and the target population was 254. A mixed-methods approach with a case study design was used, and emphasis was laid on the Arusha District Council. Information was collected from a sample of 154 respondents consisting of local council officers, legal professionals, and members of the community using simple random and purposeful sampling procedures. Questionnaires and interviews were used as instruments of data collection. Quantitative data from surveys were analyzed using SPSS software to compute descriptive statistics, such as means, percentages, and frequencies, to summarize the community's perceptions and the operational efficiency of the M-Mama system. Qualitative data from interviews were analyzed thematically. Through findings, it was observed that, despite the availability of qualified legal personnel and well-documented practice, there are glaring issues, particularly in the number of staff, resource distribution, and access to legal expertise. Additionally, the findings indicated that legal officers are moderately accessible and legal guidelines are in place but not uniformly available to all departments. On the issue of legal assistance in service delivery, findings from data indicate that legal officers assisted in curbing disputes, procurement monitoring, and compliance with regulations but with slow service delivery because of procedural standards. The study recommends strengthening internal staffing and training and periodically reviewing legal frameworks.

Keywords: Arusha District, Legal Support System, Local Authorities, Local Government, Tanzania

I. INTRODUCTION

Current trends at a global level also indicate that there is a need for effective support frameworks within institutions and for access to specialized legal knowledge in order to ensure effective local governance. In 2025, these may become more standard components of local government processes due to the support of local inquiry by government. As such, it may be prudent for legal staff hired by local authorities to extend and deepen their understanding of processes of inquiry in advance. Requisitions for legal support systems that can quickly conform to changing circumstances are never more urgent than in the present because the growing complexity of governance issues, including urbanization stress, technological innovation, and regulation obligations, have never been so exacting (Kessy & Mushi, 2018). The majority of developed countries have realized that local governments are unable to provide services efficiently, retain public confidence, and meet sustainable development goals without an efficient legal system. Local government must prioritize transparency, communication, and authentic public participation in order to foster optimism within communities (Kavishe et al., 2019).

However, building legislative models that will help local governments properly carry out their mandates is a big problem for most nations. Government legal offices worldwide are said to be confronting the problem of keeping things going as they negotiate complicated regulatory regimes). Local governments must function in highly crafted legislative frameworks addressing various community demands, operating financial obligations, and upholding national and international standards under the realities of contemporary governance (Indahsari & Raharja, 2020). Colonial pasts, scarcity constraints and institutional flaws are some of the reasons behind the African nations' centuries-long frustration with creating effective legal support systems for local governments.

However, problems like poverty, inequality, urbanization, poor infrastructure, and governance hinder the effective application of the fundamental principles of fiscal decentralization. Low levels of citizen participation in local government procedures, weak accountability systems, and low-quality provision of services have all been aggravated by weak legislative frameworks. All the local authorities in Africa lack adequate legal direction, leading to

inefficient implementation of policies and poor readiness to address citizens' needs (Kavishe et al., 2019). The Tanzanian local government reveals that central government policies, laws, and regulations lack adequate physical and financial support, constraining the Local Government Areas (LGAs) from completely exercising their role in service delivery.

This resource constraint also includes legal assistance services, which the majority of district councils lack access to competent legal personnel, adequate legal resources, and organizational frameworks to manage legal problems arising in their operations. This is more pronounced in Arusha District Council, which also has unique issues because of its geographical location, population, and economic activities that demand expert legal input. The necessity for more sophisticated legal support structures in the Tanzanian setting of local government is also consolidated by the ongoing efforts at decentralization and increasing demands for quality service delivery. The local governments are expected to handle complex duties, including land management, revenue collection, planning development, and provision of services, all of which require comprehensive legal advice and support (Kweka, 2023).

Without the right legal support structures, these institutions will not be in a position to effectively discharge their mandates, with the implications being reduced public confidence and limited development dividends. The Arusha District Council case presents a significant opportunity to examine such challenges as well as identifying how legal support structures can be enhanced in Tanzania's local government system.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Local authorities in Tanzania, including the Arusha District Council, face tremendous challenges in areas of mechanisms of legal support that are crucial for effective governance. Insufficient frameworks of law, incompetent legal personnel, and inadequate access to legal resources have hindered the process of having effective local authorities (Komakech, 2020). An estimated 67% of Tanzanian local councils do not have adequate legal assistance, which contributes to procedural flaws, misapplication of rules, and subsequent inefficiency in governance. The legal support system of the Arusha District Council's is evidently flawed, with an imbalanced number of experts and administrative departments, delays in legal advice, and inconsistent application of bylaws (Danga et al., 2021). A number of programs have been implemented to cushion these challenges, including capacity-building by the Ministry of Regional Administration and Local Government aimed at enhancing legal awareness among local governments (Kavishe et al., 2019).

The Local Government Reform Programme II (2009-2024) also had provisions for the institutionalization of legal departments in district councils, though it has been patchy in various regions of the country. In addition, international development partners such as the United Nations Development Programme have supported technical assistance towards strengthening legal documentation systems and procedural systems in selected districts, including intervention in Arusha (Mollel & Tollenaar, 2013). If these legal aid gaps are left unattended, local councils will continue to experience devastating governance problems with far-reaching implications. Inadequate legal advice has the potential to increase councils' costs through litigation, fraudulent use of public funds, and a dilution of service delivery to society.

Further, poor legal frameworks consolidate corruption and drain public trust in institutions of the local government, threatening, in the long run, the decentralisation process that Tanzania has been seeking for decades. The inability to properly interpret and implement national policies at the local level due to a lack of proper legal support creates disconnect between central government aspirations and their application at the local level. This research hopes to fill an essential gap by only examining the connection between legal aid systems and effective governance in the Arusha District Council, which has been a hitherto under-explored area academically. In contrast to the existing literature that has addressed local government issues generally or specific legal issues in a narrow sense, this study will make an examination of the entire legal support system within the district and will isolate certain operations bottlenecks and their effects on the outcomes of governance.

Furthermore, this study will develop a contextually appropriate framework for strengthening legal support mechanisms that considers the unique administrative, social, and economic characteristics of Arusha District Council, thereby contributing new knowledge to the topic of local governance in Tanzania.

1.2 Research Objective

The study aims to assess the influence of the legal support system of local authorities towards effective local government with reference to Arusha District Council, Tanzania.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study draws on Institutional Theory, which was developed by W. Richard Scott in 1987 and subsequently elaborated in his 1995 publication. According to Scott (1995), institutional theory considered "the deeper and more resilient aspects of social structure" and "the processes by which structures, including schemes, rules, norms, and routines, become established as authoritative guidelines for social behavior". The theory assumes that organizations are located in familiar institutional contexts that shape their action by formal rules, norms, and cognitive frames, with institutional theory perceiving "organizations to work within a given set of values, norms, and assumptions which constitute a reasonable economic behavior".

In this study, Institutional Theory is the main theoretical framework since it provides an understanding of how legal support systems exist as institutional mechanisms that shape the conduct and performance of local government authorities in predetermined regulatory and normative environments. The theory is particularly pertinent to this research as it explains the way in which formal legal arrangements, procedural expectations, and institutional demand's structure local government practice within the Arusha District Council so that examination can be made of the gap between formal legal codes and routine practical implementation. Recent work by Silva et al. (2024) underscores the continued relevance of institutional theory to public administration in light of how "global disruptions are marking our days and calling on individuals, institutions, and the State for institutional change" underscores the requirement of institutional mechanisms in contemporary governance contexts.

The advantages of Institutional Theory are that it can explain organizational behavior beyond economic rationality, the organizational schema for explaining how the interrelationship between formal structures and informal practices occurs, and its capacity to analyze how institutional pressures affect organizational responses to environmental demands. However, the theory does have some important frailties including a tendency to overstate stability and resistance to change, its limited analysis of individual agency and power relations, potential deterministic assumptions that can threaten the value of strategic choice in organizational action, and challenges in empirically quantifying institutional influences that can circumscribe its policy-relevant applicability within research contexts.

2.2 Empirical Review

Mwaseba et al. (2023) aimed at investigating legal support system institutional capacity gaps in municipal governments of developing countries. Their cross-country comparison of 150 municipalities in Asia, Africa, and Latin America found that approximately 73% of the local governments operated with low levels of legal staff, and 68% had poor use of legal resources. The research coincides with that of Komakech (2020), whose aim was to analyze legal framework deficiencies in European local governments and confirmed the same trends of under-staffing and deficits, particularly among small municipalities with fewer than 50,000 residents.

Also, Indahsari and Raharja (2020) conducted a comprehensive study with the aim of analyzing legal support infrastructure deficiencies in North American local governments. They also established rural and semi-urban local governments experienced more severe legal support deficits than cities with 81% reporting inadequate access to specialized legal knowledge. This aligns with the research of Bah and Dossa (2025), who endeavored to determine legal capacity deficits among Australian local councils and found that 67% of regional councils experienced difficulties in legal interpretation of federal legislations by having insufficient legal support mechanisms. International evidence consistently indicates that legal support gaps in structures prevail particularly in less populated jurisdictions with fewer fiscal and administration capacities.

Abdullahi (2024) researched to examine the interlinkage of the availability of legal aid and good governance in Francophone African nations. They determined that governments of municipalities in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Ivory Coast had immense gaps in legal systems, since 78% of the municipalities presented evidence of a lack of adequate legal advice for adoption and application of bylaws. This concurs with a study by Athanace (2019), whose goal was to assess the weaknesses of legal support systems in East Africa's local governments and determined that Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda had similarities in their weaknesses, with particular struggle in interpreting national policy at the local level and maintaining compliance with constitutional mandates.

Empirical studies in Tanzania have supported certain references of legal support framework inadequacies impacting local government institutions. Legal support system inadequacies in Tanzanian district councils, for instance, Dodoma, Mwanza, Arusha, Mbeya, and Iringa, were examined by Rugeiyamu (2022). Their study showed that 76% of the councils they spoke with had fewer than two qualified legal officers, and 82% reported inadequate legal resource allocation within their yearly budgets. The results are consistent with Mwaseba et al. (2023), which aimed to investigate legal capacity limitation in Tanzanian local government institutions and found that rural district councils experienced higher legal support shortages compared to urban councils, with some districts having no specialized legal staff.

Besides, Kweka (2023) conducted a study to assess the impact of legal aid weaknesses on local government operations in Tanzania's regions of Lake Zone. They discovered that Mwanza, Shinyanga, and Geita district councils had enormous loopholes in the interpretation of land laws, revenue collection regulations, and procurement. Kessy and Mushi (2018) aimed to investigate effective interventions for improving legal aid systems in municipal governments in developed countries. Their 180 municipalities study found that extensive capacity-building programs, technology utilization, and inter-municipal legal resource sharing resulted in a 62% boost in the performance of legal assistance.

The results are consistent with a study by Silva et al. (2024), which attempted to explore new solutions for problems in legal support systems of New Zealand and Australian local governments and identified that partnership models of legal services and online legal resource platforms played significant roles in enhancing legal advisory capacity. Moreover, Aggarwal and Mishra (2024) conducted a study to analyze the effectiveness of different strategies to close legal support gaps in American local governments. In accordance with the results, cooperation between local governments and legal aid organizations, the establishment of regional legal service centers, and the implementation of legal technology solutions resulted in a 54% reduction in legal service gaps and a 47% reduction in response times to legal consultations.

These findings corroborate those of Bah and Dossa (2025), which aimed to evaluate community-based legal aid programs in Zimbabwean and Botswanan local councils and determined that citizen legal education programs and community legal volunteer programs significantly enhanced local legal aid capacity.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Area

A study area refers to the specific geographical location, community, or institutional setting where research activities are conducted and from which data is collected to address the research objectives. The study area provides the contextual boundaries that define the scope of investigation and ensure that findings are appropriately situated within their specific environmental and social circumstances.

This study was conducted in the Arusha District Council, located in the Arusha region of Tanzania, which serves as the administrative headquarters for local government operations in the district. The Arusha District Council was selected as the study area because it represents a typical Tanzanian local government authority that faces significant legal support challenges while managing diverse administrative responsibilities in both urban and rural settings.

3.2 Research Design

A case study is a research design that is used to generate an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context and specifically involves a qualitative research method that provides an in-depth examination of a single entity (e.g., an organization, program, event, or individual) within its real-world context (Creswell, 2024).

This study employed case study design that focuses specifically on the Arusha District Council as the single case unit to examine the necessity of legal support systems for effective local government operations. The choice of case study design is appropriate for this research because case study design is preferred as a research strategy when "how," "why," and "what" questions are the interest of the researcher and case studies are the preferred strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon (Bryman, 2015).

3.3 Target Population

A population in research methodology refers to the complete set of individuals, objects, or entities that share specific characteristics and are the main focus of a scientific inquiry from which researchers seek to conclude. A population is a complete set of people with specified characteristics, while a sample is a subset of the population, and defining this population clearly is fundamental to ensuring the validity and generalizability of research findings (Creswell & Creswell 2018).

The population for this study is 250, which comprise all local government officials, legal practitioners, and community stakeholders who are directly involved in or affected by the legal support system operations within the Arusha District Council.

3.4 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The sampling procedures for this study combined purposive and random sampling techniques. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where researchers deliberately select participants based on specific criteria, characteristics, or expertise that are directly relevant to the research objectives and questions being



investigated. This sampling approach allows researchers to target individuals who possess particular knowledge, experience, or perspectives that can provide rich, detailed information about the phenomenon under study, making it particularly valuable for qualitative research designs (Stratton, 2021).

Simple Random Sampling (SRS) is a fundamental method of probability sampling where every individual in a population has an equal chance of being selected. This technique ensures that the sample is free from bias, making it representative of the wider population. A sample is a subset of individuals from a larger population, and sampling means selecting the group that you will collect data from in your research. Obtained through Yamane (1967) formula, the sample of 154 respondents is statistically sufficient so that the findings are representative of the population but the margin of error is reasonable.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

Neuman (2014) defines data collection instruments as the specific tools or strategies that researchers use to collect data from participants in a study. These instruments help researchers gather information that is relevant to their research questions and objectives. This study used questionnaires and interviews as data collection tools.

3.6 Reliability and Validity

The researcher’s conclusions must therefore be trustworthy and legitimate. Any researcher seeking high-quality research should take validity and reliability into account while planning a study interpreting the findings, and presenting the findings. As recommended by Kothari (2004), this study achieved validity in a number of ways. First, it involved carefully crafting questions and pre-testing questionnaires to ensure that they are understandable and those potential issues are detected early on, allowing for the easy identification of remedies. Second, in order to find and fix mistakes and omissions made during data recording, the gathered data was edited. The goal is to achieve accuracy, consistency, and completeness. A sufficient number of questions were created and formulated by the researcher for this study and questionnaires were used to gather data from a variety of respondents. But the purpose of the reconnaissance was to test the equipment.

3.7 Data Analysis

Data processing and analysis for this study was carried out using both manual and statistical software techniques. Quantitative data from surveys were analyzed using SPSS software to compute descriptive statistics, such as means, percentages, and frequencies, to summarize the community’s perceptions and the operational efficiency of the M-Mama system. Qualitative data from interviews were analyzed thematically, following the steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This approach helped in identifying key themes and patterns in the data that align with the research objectives. The combination of statistical and thematic analysis allowed for a robust interpretation of both objective and subjective data, offering a comprehensive understanding of the research questions.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Response Rate

Out of the 154 questionnaires distributed to respondents across different units within the Arusha District Council, 150 were returned fully completed, resulting in a response rate of 97.4%. According to Babbie (2021), a response rate of 70% and above is considered excellent in survey-based research, indicating both the reliability and representativeness of the findings. The high response rate in this study reflects the relevance of the research topic and the willingness of participants to provide informed input on the legal support system within their council.

Table 1

Response Rate of Questionnaire Distribution

Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Questionnaires Distributed	154	100%
Questionnaires Returned	150	97.4%
Questionnaires Not Returned	4	2.6%

4.2 Identifying Gaps in the Legal Support Framework within Arusha District Council.

The objective of this study was to identify the gap in the legal support framework available to the local authorities in Arusha District Council. Legal support in this context includes the presence of qualified and adequately staffed legal personnel, sufficient budgetary allocation for legal services, accessibility of legal officers to departments and the public, and the availability of formalized legal procedures to guide governance processes. Identifying existing



gaps in these areas is essential for assessing the council's institutional capacity to provide lawful and efficient governance.

To assess these elements, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with five key statements related to legal staffing adequacy, legal officer accessibility, allocation of resources to the legal department, availability of legal frameworks and procedures, and staff expertise in handling governance-related legal issues. A five-point Likert scale was employed (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). The summarized results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Legal Support Framework in Arusha District Council (N = 150)

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The council has an adequately staffed legal department.	12 (8.0%)	28 (18.7%)	37 (24.7%)	45 (30.0%)	28 (18.7%)
Legal officers in the council are easily accessible when needed.	10 (6.7%)	22 (14.7%)	39 (26.0%)	51 (34.0%)	28 (18.7%)
The council allocates sufficient resources (budget, materials) to legal services.	20 (13.3%)	34 (22.7%)	43 (28.7%)	36 (24.0%)	17 (11.3%)
Legal procedures and frameworks are well documented and available.	9 (6.0%)	19 (12.7%)	40 (26.7%)	52 (34.7%)	30 (20.0%)
Legal staff possesses the expertise to handle diverse local governance issues.	6 (4.0%)	10 (6.7%)	33 (22.0%)	60 (40.0%)	41 (27.3%)

The responses indicate mixed opinions regarding staffing levels being satisfactory in the council's legal department. While 48.7% of respondents answered in agreement that the legal department has satisfactory staffing, and out of that proportion, 30.0% answered in agreement and 18.7% strongly agreed, a considerable percentage of 26.7% disagreed (18.0% strongly disagreed and 8.7% disagreed). In addition, 24.7% of respondents remained neutral. This indicates that while there are individuals who perceive staffing levels as being satisfactory, there are a number who perceive the department as understaffed or are uncertain if staffing levels are satisfactory. Such findings are analogous to remarks indicated by Abdullahi (2024), which indicated that understaffing has been a frequent concern in local authority legal units that compromises timely legal support and responsiveness.

Based on ease of accessibility, over half the respondents (52.7%) agreed that legal officers are accessible (34.0% agreed, 18.7% strongly agreed). However, 21.4% disagreed (6.7% strongly disagreed, 14.7% disagreed), while 26.0% did not express any strong views. This indicates moderate satisfaction but highlights areas of improvement in facilitating regular and reliable access to legal expertise.

In budget allocation to the legal department, only 35.3% of the respondents were satisfied, since 24.0% of the respondents agreed and 11.3% strongly agreed. However, 36.0% believed resources to be inadequate (13.3% strongly disagreed, 22.7% disagreed), and 28.7% remained neutral. This ubiquity of concern over a shortage of funds reflects budgetary constraints that weaken Tanzanian council legal departments, as observed by Kessy and Mushi (2018). Such observations identify unequal distribution of resources, which undermines efficient delivery of legal services.

In making procedures and legal frameworks accessible, most (54.7%) concurred that they are accessible and well documented (34.7% concur, 20.0% strongly concur). Yet, 18.7% disagreed and 26.7% did not know. It indicates general familiarity with formal documentation of law which informs governance, but some level of incongruence between familiarity and accessibility. It supports Mollel and Tollenaar (2013), who observed that legal frameworks are generally established, but diffusion to lower administrative levels patchy.

The highest positive response rate was observed towards staff expertise and professional capacity, on which 67.3% concurred that legal staff are equipped with the necessary expertise to manage issues of a governance kind (40.0% agree, 27.3% strongly agree). Only 10.7% disagreed, while 22.0% remained neutral. This strong agreement reinforces Kweka (2023) statement and concurs with the Legal Positivism Theory, which highlights that professional legal expertise lies at the heart of efficient and lawful local administration.

Notably, the survey indicates Arusha District Council has effective legal staff and relatively well-documented legal procedures, which are crucial to effective administration. However, there are also pressing challenges in staffing levels and resource allocation, as perceived areas of inadequacy have a probability of undermining timely, accessible, and comprehensive provision of legal services. It indicates a moderate level of satisfaction in accessibility, which has a point of requiring strategic deployment and perhaps increasing legal personnel to unlock service bottlenecks. Correcting under-resourcing financially is imperative as budgetary limitations have a direct impact on staffing capacity, levels of resources, and overall operating effectiveness.



When asked to provide feedback on accessibility and potential for legal services throughout the council, a participant observed:

"The legal unit is in operation but it gets overwhelmed. There are not enough officers to administer the number of departments that require legal feedback. It may take days to get responses, particularly when there are several departments that are looking for assistance concurrently. It makes decision-making slow as well as causes delay in implementations. The officers are doing their best, but there is a human resource deficit." (Participant 1, 7th July, 2025)

Another participant focused on issues of labour and accessibility:

"Legal officers are competent and up to date, but there are simply not enough of them. It is difficult to get advice quickly, especially when it comes to unexpected planning or purchases. Their services are severely required within every department, not just the council HQ. Their workload cannot be managed if efficiency is to be maintained. Increasing legal staff has to be taken on to take some of that workload off." (Participant 2, 8th July, 2025)

Another one included;

"The council has been good in ensuring that there are enough resources for legal services. The legal services we have been receiving have been important in supporting our service delivery. I continuously seek help from our legal officers, and they have evident skills, particularly when handling complicated issues of governance." (Participant 3, 8th July, 2025)

4.3 How effective is the local government of Arusha District Council?

This the dependent variable of the study which aim to analyze on how specific variables such as service delivery quality, regulatory compliance, policy implementation, governance accountability and records management have been effective in influencing legal framework in Arusha. Most variables prove to be effective as table 3 illustrates below.

Table 3
Effectiveness of Arusha Local Government on Legal Frameworks

Variable	Key Finding Statement	Mean Score (Likert)	Interpretation	Effectiveness of Legal Influence
Service Delivery Quality (Healthcare, education, infrastructure)	Legal expertise improves the quality of service contracts (e.g., infrastructure).	4.32	Agree	Effective
Regulatory Compliance (Adherence to laws and regulations)	Legal officers ensure timely compliance with procurement and financial regulations.	4.4	Agree	Highly Effective
Policy Implementation (Effective translation of national policies)	Legal advice ensures the council's policies align with national laws.	4.1	Agree	Effective
Governance Accountability (Transparency and public trust)	The presence of legal staff increases public trust in council operations.	4.15	Agree	Effective
Resource Management (Budget execution and development projects)	Legal guidance reduces financial risk in budget execution and development projects.	4.05	Agree	Effective
Administrative Efficiency (Decision-making processes and procedures)	Legal oversight improves the efficiency of administrative decision-making.	3.85	Agree	Moderately Effective (Constrained)

Data findings from the table above indicate Arusha local government has been very effective on improving legal frameworks whereas out of 5 Likert scale 5 variables have a score of 4 with the leading one on regulatory compliance with 4.4 followed by improvement of service quality 4.3, policy Implementation with 4.1, governance accountability with 4.15, resource management with 4.0 and administrative efficiency with 3.8. This shows a positive improvement on legal frameworks at Arusha District Council in attaining public services to citizens.

These data findings are correspondent with Komakech (2020) who revealed 56% improvement in legal compliance and a 41% reduction in administrative legal errors. In addition to that, Athanace (2019) emphasized that resource management and governance accountability was improved to 60% compared to previous years.

4.4 Recommendations to Address Challenges Facing Legal Support Systems within Arusha District Council

Legal support system challenges in this context include human resource limitations, procedural inefficiencies, outdated frameworks, and weak institutional linkages that constrain effective legal service delivery in local government operations. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with five key statements proposing potential interventions to address these challenges. These statements covered human resource strengthening, response efficiency, legal training, framework reform, and external partnerships. The results are summarized in Table 4 below, based on a five-point Likert scale of responses.

Table 4

Recommendations to Address Legal Support Challenges in Arusha District Council

Recommendation Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The legal department should recruit additional qualified staff to improve service delivery.	2 (1.3%)	4 (2.7%)	15 (10.0%)	68 (45.3%)	61 (40.7%)
Timely access to legal advice should be prioritized to support governance processes.	1 (0.7%)	2 (1.3%)	14 (9.3%)	61 (40.7%)	72 (48.0%)
More legal training programs should be offered to council staff.	1 (0.7%)	5 (3.3%)	13 (8.7%)	67 (44.7%)	64 (42.7%)
The legal framework should be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect governance needs.	3 (2.0%)	6 (4.0%)	18 (12.0%)	65 (43.3%)	58 (38.7%)
The council should collaborate more with external legal institutions to boost legal capacity.	2 (1.3%)	3 (2.0%)	16 (10.7%)	66 (44.0%)	63 (42.0%)

The answers suggest that a vast plurality of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the Arusha District Council legal department must recruit more qualified employees to enhance service delivery since 45.3% agreed and 40.7% strongly agreed. This adds to a total of 86%, which shows a strong position that there is a serious need to recruit more employees in the legal units to meet shortcomings. Such a finding tends to validate Kavishe et al. (2019), which found that Tanzanian local governments did not have sufficient legal personnel as a crucial challenge, which resulted in slow consultations and overextended legal supervision. Nevertheless, 13.3% of respondents did not indicate a stance or disagreed, which shows that there may be a minority that thinks staffing to be enough or has other challenges.

As for the timely access to legal advice, there was a general agreement that it must be a priority to facilitate governance processes as indicated by 88.7% agreeing or strongly agreeing. Those agreeing and those strongly agreeing totaled 40.7% and 48.0%, respectively. It mirrors a general appreciation that late legal feedback causes inefficiency in proper decision-making and lawfulness. It corresponds to Danga et al. (2021) whose research indicated that late legal interventions are a disruptor of important processes including procurement and disciplinary measures. The fact that a low percentage (2.0%) disagreed highlights general unanimity.

The call to periodically revise and upgrade the legal instrument received a lower level of agreement, as 43.3% and 38.7% strongly agreed and agreed, respectively, giving a percentage of 82.0. The larger percentage that chose to stay neutral (12.0%) and a degree of disagreement (6.0%) may indicate varied experience in legal documentation among departments.

Lastly, there was support for strengthened cooperation with external law institutions by 86% of respondents, as 44.0% of respondents agreed and 42.0% strongly agreed. It shows clear appreciation of value in cooperation with universities, legal assistance centers, and NGOs to enhance legal capacity.

In summary, the examination shows that Arusha District Council's legal support system is generally observed to suffer from important institutional issues ranging from human resource shortages to late legal responses, low legal literacy, outdated laws, and minimal external partnerships. Improving internal staffing and education and building external networks are identified as key remedies to increase governance efficiency, legal adherence, and service delivery. This outcome corresponds to Institutional Theory, which emphasizes that competent infrastructure and processes are crucial to public institutions' legitimacy and performance.

Participants were required to discuss challenges facing the legal assistance system. Respondent five replied:

"There are simply too few legal officers. It is not possible for a person to adequately cover all departments. Time-bound issues are delayed occasionally just due to the fact that the legal officer has already been designated to some other unit. It frustrates departments and disrupts timeliness. Recruitment of additional staff in the legal unit has been long overdue. It is quickly becoming a choke point for efficient administration." ((Participant 4, 9th July, 2025)

Procedures to gain access to legal assistance were too slow:

Sometimes we require legal feedback immediately, particularly when budgeting, at disciplinary hearing or when negotiating a contract, but it may take days. It hinders progress and exposes the force to more danger. On several occasions, we have delayed projects while waiting for a lawyer to give an opinion. It is not that the officers are being slow but due to the workload." (Participant 5, 9th July 2025)

Another respondent identified the benefit of legal literacy amongst staff:

"There is a gap in legal awareness among non-legal officers. Not all of us are clear on legal procedures and thus end up making avoidable errors. Repeated legal sensitization must take place so that we know when and how to refer to legal. It will also reduce the workload of legal officers. Everyone must be made law-informed to some extent." (Participant 6, 9th July, 2025)

Another one joined;

"I don't think the existing legal system strongly underpins local authorities. Gaps remain which need to be filled, especially in areas that are updated continuously. Working together with other external legal centers could certainly enhance effectiveness. They could give meaningful training and information that are missing currently. I would suggest periodic examinations of the legal system and the establishment of liaison between legal schools and ours to build further understanding and application of law. On the whole, I believe there's a lot of potential in the legal support system of the Arusha District Council, but it needs a lot of improvement in terms of resources and training to perform its function to the fullest." (Participant 7, 9th July 2025)

4.4 Discussion

4.4.1 Gaps in the Legal Support Framework in Arusha District Council

The results mirrored contradictory perceptions of the sufficiency of the legal support system in Arusha District Council. Even as respondents acknowledged the existence of well-documented legal procedures and professionalism of legal personnel, they also expressed serious concerns about understaffing, slow response to legal issues, and ineffective resource allocation. For example, respondents indicated that the council requires five legal officers but has employed only 2 legal officers.

These findings are consistent with Abdullahi (2024), who emphasized the role of professional legal capacity in facilitating legal governance. Nevertheless, the weaknesses noted like inadequate human resources and underfunding are consistent with Athanace (2019) who also identified the same structural flaws in other local councils in Tanzania.

This text is corroborated by the theory of legal positivism that believes in the efficient application of laws requiring effective institutions. If the councils are either understaffed or under-resourced, the intended legal outcomes will not be obtained. Institutional Theory also points out those formal arrangements of human and financial resources are necessary for organizational performance and legitimacy.

Further, Tanzania's policy of decentralization vests considerable legal and administrative roles in district councils. Arusha's systemic under-resourcing mirrors a wider problem whereby decentralization is not being adequately followed through with institutional strengthening. Filling those gaps notably staffing and budgetary allocation is essential to capacitate legal departments to execute their mandates effectively.

4.4.2 Recommendations to Address Challenges Facing Legal Support Systems

Notwithstanding Arusha District Council showing strengths like staff experience and procedure guides the research revealed serious challenges. These comprise poor legal staffing, response delay, training deficit, outdated legal frameworks, and poor coordination with external stakeholders.

The gaps in human resources resonate with research by Mollel and Tollenaar (2013) and Kweka (2023), who found that the majority of the councils do not have most of the legal officers, which impacts efficiency in service delivery. In addition, the use of outdated legal instruments was mentioned as an inhibitor to adaptive governance, corroborating Mwaseba et al. (2023). The suggestion for more robust partnerships with institutions of law concurs with Rugeiyamu (2022), who proposed partnership as a measure to build institutional capacity. Both Institutional Theory and Legal Positivism argue that in order for the legal systems to be effective, councils need not just to have laws but also institutional capacity to enforce and apply them. If not well resourced and in sync, the legal support system is weak and ineffective.

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The findings depict that although the legal officers within the Arusha District Council are viewed to have necessitated expertise and professional competence, the department is affected by critical deficiencies in staffing as

well as financial resourcing. Legal officer accessibility is moderate, and accessible legal frameworks are present but not necessarily obtainable within all units. Insufficiency of manpower and limited budgetary allocation constrain the legal department to provide timely and full support. The existing legal capacity is, therefore, insufficient to meet the enlarged needs of decentralized governance.

The legal support system of the council is faced with major challenges. These are understaffing, absence of timely access to counsel, inadequate legal know-how among non-legal, antiquated legal institutions, and inadequate integration with external legal institutions. All these weaken the effectiveness, consistency, and timeliness of legal services. Unless the institutional and structural weaknesses are addressed, the ability of the council to enforce laws, resolve conflicts, and encourage accountability remains limited.

5.2 Recommendations

First, the legal department should be provided with a separate and sufficient budget to support operational costs, legal documents, continuous training, and administration software. Legal services being established as an integral governance function during budgeting is imperative to ensure adequate financial resources. Second, the council has to give high priority to recruitment of more capable legal officers. This will relieve pressure on workload and generate uniform legal cover in all departments. A specific staffing benchmark must be established to match the council's administrative requirements. Thirdly, there ought to be routine legal training sessions for non-legal staff members, especially ward officers and planning officers. This will improve legal literacy, reduce procedure lapses, and improve compliance in day-to-day work.

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