



Critical Factors Influencing Land Conflicts and Strategies Employed to Mitigate Them in Dodoma City, Tanzania

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Abstract: Globally, land conflicts have long been a critical issue, particularly in rural, urban, and peri-urban areas. In Tanzania, various strategies have been implemented to manage land disputes, but challenges persist due to rapid urbanization and competing land use. Therefore, the study focused on assessing the factors influencing land conflicts and mitigation strategies used in Dodoma City Council, whereby Nzuguni ward was selected as a case study. The study used a mixed-methods approach, which accommodated a case study research design. Structured questionnaires and interviews were used for data collection involving a total of 98 respondents randomly selected from the study area. Quantitative data were analysed by descriptive analysis, while qualitative data were analysed using the content analysis method. It was found that rapid urbanisation, competing land uses, inadequate land use planning, land speculation, and corruption are the common factors contributing to land conflicts in Nzuguni ward. The study also found that land conflicts in Dodoma City have been efficiently addressed by adopting various strategies such as participatory urban planning, mediation and arbitration, legal and policy framework, and digital land registration. The study recommends anti-corruption measures, improved land tenure security, community empowerment, and policy reforms to mitigate land conflicts. By addressing these challenges, stakeholders can promote sustainable land management and socio-economic stability in peri-urban and urban areas of Dodoma City Council.

Keywords: Land conflicts, mitigation strategies, Nzuguni ward & Dodoma City Council

How to cite this work (APA):

Adwell, M. M. & Sebahene (2025). Critical Factors Influencing Land Conflicts and Strategies Employed to Mitigate Them in Dodoma City, Tanzania. *Journal of Research Innovation and Implications in Education*, 9(4), 388 – 400. <https://doi.org/10.59765/bgv68>.

1. Introduction

Urban land conflicts arise from speculative land grabbing, weak governance systems, and ambiguous tenure arrangements. Oki (2013) highlights mining-related disputes in the Philippines, where corporations exploit lands under unclear ownership, displacing communities and creating socio-economic vulnerabilities. Similarly, Deininger and Castagnini (2005) identify speculative acquisitions and overlapping claims as primary causes of disputes in Latin America's rapidly urbanised regions, where weak governance fails to resolve conflicts.

Historical injustices and rapid urbanisation are significant contributors to land conflicts in Africa. Auma (2016) observes that in Northern Uganda,

disputes over agricultural land reduce productivity and exacerbate poverty, particularly among women. Adebajo et al. (2015) report that in Nigeria, weak enforcement of land laws and overlapping claims disrupt livelihoods, increasing tensions between rural and urban populations. Land conflicts in Africa are widespread, driven by both historical factors and contemporary pressures. Land tenure systems in Africa are often complex and varied, influenced by customary, statutory, and religious laws. According to Moyo (2018), land is viewed as a communal resource, and conflicts arise when individuals or groups seek exclusive control over land resources, often in urbanizing regions in many African countries. Furthermore, the absence of clear land titles or property registration systems leaves land tenure highly insecure, fuelling conflicts. This insecurity is a significant driver

of land disputes, especially in rural areas where land is a primary asset for economic survival.

Also, competing land uses for housing, farming, and other development purposes to cater to economic development and the needs of the growing population significantly contribute to land conflicts (Tsegaye & Biruk, 2019). Such conflicts manifest as the overexploitation of land resources, land grabs, and disputes over boundaries between neighbouring communities, and are more prevalent in peri-urban areas. Growing peri-urban areas are constantly encroaching on rural areas dominated by subsistence farming or livestock grazing, which leads to tensions and violent conflicts (Vlassenroot & Raeymaekers, 2020).

Another contributing factor to land conflicts in Africa is the legacy of colonialism, which created inequitable land distribution and disrupted traditional systems of land ownership. According to Nkurunziza (2021), colonial powers often allocated land to foreign settlers or large-scale agricultural ventures, leaving indigenous populations with limited access to land. This history of dispossession and marginalization has left many African countries with land tenure systems that are ill-equipped to handle the demands of modern society, creating fertile ground for conflicts.

In some cases, these historical grievances continue to manifest in land disputes that are rooted in unresolved claims over land lost during colonial rule. Additionally, the role of ethnic and political divisions in Africa also contributes to land conflicts. In many African countries, land is a critical source of identity and power. As emphasized by Kroeze (2020), conflicts over land often overlap with ethnic rivalries, where different groups claim ownership over the same land based on historical or cultural ties. These conflicts are further exacerbated by weak governance structures and inadequate conflict resolution mechanisms. The lack of effective land management policies and the politicization of land issues often lead to protracted land disputes, creating social instability and hindering development efforts in many parts of Africa (Duncan & Kinyanjui, 2021).

In Tanzania, land conflicts have long been a critical issue, particularly in rural, urban, and peri-urban areas. Msuya (2009) highlights that in the Same District, farmers and pastoralists have clashed over land use since the 1970s, mainly due to competing demands for farming and grazing land. Farmers accuse pastoralists of allowing their cattle to graze on crops, while pastoralists claim that farmers destroy grasslands needed for their livestock. These conflicts have led to environmental degradation, including soil erosion, water pollution, and damaged infrastructure (Msuya, 2009).

Mbonde (2015) identifies similar challenges in Mkoka and Songambele, where land disputes stem from land grabbing, demarcation disputes, and double leasing. These conflicts result in violence, loss of livelihoods, and reduced agricultural productivity, illustrating the broad socio-economic impact of land disputes across Tanzania. Kironde (2019) highlights that in Dodoma, speculative land acquisitions due to the city's rapid expansion as Tanzania's administrative capital have displaced vulnerable populations, creating further tensions over land ownership and use.

Speculative land grabbing, unregulated urban expansion, and governance weaknesses are key to disputes in Tanzania. Kironde (2019) notes that Dodoma's administrative transition has intensified land disputes by displacing vulnerable populations and creating tensions over ownership. Similarly, Mbonde (2015) highlights competing land-use demands in rural areas, where environmental degradation and unplanned development exacerbate community conflicts.

However, there have been several initiatives across the globe, ranging from legal and policy frameworks that regulate land ownership, thereby mitigating disputes. Including formalization of land tenure through systematic land registration and cadastral mapping (Wit, 2021). For instance, in Colombia, land mediation programs have helped de-escalate conflicts and provide fair solutions for displaced communities (World Bank, 2020). In Africa, land conflicts are often linked to weak governance, overlapping tenure systems, and historical grievances. Several African nations have adopted land tenure reforms to address these challenges. Similarly, Ghana's Customary Land Secretariat (CLS) initiative integrates traditional leaders into the formal land governance framework, ensuring that local communities have a voice in land administration while improving dispute resolution mechanisms (Boone, 2020). Despite these efforts, implementation challenges remain, particularly in cases where corruption and elite land grabs undermine reform initiatives (Akinwumi, 2020).

Countries such as Rwanda and Thailand have successfully reduced land conflicts by implementing nationwide land titling programs, which provide legal recognition of ownership and reduce uncertainties over land claims (Ali et al., 2019). Furthermore, alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms, including mediation and arbitration, have proven effective in resolving land-related disputes outside of lengthy and costly litigation processes (Ali et al., 2019).

In Tanzania, various strategies have been implemented to manage land disputes, but challenges persist due to rapid urbanization and competing land uses. The National Land Policy of 1995 sought to address land governance issues by promoting equitable access to land, security of tenure, and legal recognition of customary land rights (URT, 2017). Additionally,

Tanzania has established land tribunals and decentralized land dispute settlement bodies to provide accessible conflict resolution mechanisms. However, studies indicate that these tribunals often suffer from inefficiencies, inadequate resources, and corruption, limiting their effectiveness (Mafuru, 2020). The government has also promoted participatory land-use planning in rural and peri-urban areas, aiming to involve local communities in decision-making processes to prevent land encroachments and disputes (Malima, 2021).

Furthermore, the integration of technological solutions, such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and blockchain-based land registries, has been proposed as a way to enhance transparency and reduce fraudulent land transactions. Countries like Kenya and Ghana have begun experimenting with digital land records to improve accountability and minimize conflicts arising from unclear land ownership (Tadesse, 2021). Tanzania could benefit from similar innovations to streamline its land administration system and improve tenure security in rapidly urbanizing areas like Dodoma.

Addressing land conflicts requires a combination of legal reforms, institutional strengthening, community participation, and technological innovation. While global and African experiences provide valuable lessons, the Tanzanian context necessitates localized solutions that consider historical, social, and economic dynamics. Strengthening land governance institutions, ensuring fair dispute resolution mechanisms, and promoting transparency in land administration are critical steps toward sustainable land conflict management. This paper highlights the research findings on factors influencing land conflicts in Dodoma City, specifically in Nzuguni Ward, and strategies being used by the Dodoma City Council to address them.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The existing literature has explored the causes of land conflicts in Tanzania, linking them to the country's political dynamics. Despite government policy initiatives and legal frameworks to address them, land conflicts have continued to increase. Notable studies by Bandyopadhyay (2011), Shah (2017), Moyo (2011), and Urio (2016) have examined land tenure systems in Tanzania, governance issues, and dispute resolution mechanisms in different rural and urban areas. However, much of this literature emphasises the legal and administrative dimensions of land conflicts, overlooking their broader causes, particularly in urbanising settings. For example, Eliza (2015) examined conflicts over land between farmers and pastoralists in Tanzania but did not consider rapidly urbanising areas. Studies by Cotula (2007) and Benjaminsen et al. (2012) highlight the general impacts of land conflicts on livelihoods, yet they do not detail

the factors influencing conflicts in peri-urban areas or strategies to mitigate them. While land conflicts are well documented, there is limited research on the driving factors in the fastest-growing areas, especially in peri-urban areas. Additionally, there are limited research findings on the effectiveness of land conflict mitigation strategies in rapidly expanding peri-urban areas in Tanzania. This study was designed to address this research gap by exploring the causes of land conflicts in Nzuguni Ward and mitigation measures used by Dodoma City Council to come up with recommendations on how to improve the existing situation. The study was guided by the following question: What are the driving factors of land conflicts, and what mitigation strategies are used to address them in Dodoma City Council?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study integrates Conflict Theory and Institutional Theory to comprehensively analyse land conflicts in Nzuguni Ward. Conflict Theory, rooted in Karl Marx's 19th-century critique of social stratification, provides a critical framework for analyzing the socio-economic dimensions of land conflicts. The theory posits that society is fundamentally divided by inequalities in power, wealth, and resource access, engendering conflict between dominant and marginalized groups. Marx emphasized how ruling classes maintain control over production means and resource distribution, systematically oppressing subordinate classes. In this study, the conflict theory was applied to understand the key factors influencing land conflicts in the study area and its socio-economic implications on the living conditions of Nzuguni residents. Nevertheless, this paper focuses on the factors influencing land conflicts in Nzuguni Ward, Dodoma City.

The institutional Theory, developed by Douglass North in the early 1990s, explores how formal institutions—laws, policies, and regulations—and informal institutions—norms, traditions, and social practices—shape human behaviour, social interactions, and economic outcomes. Institutions serve as the “rules of the game” that govern land ownership, use, and distribution, thereby influencing the dynamics of land conflicts. From this perspective, land disputes often emerge from institutional deficiencies, including ambiguous land tenure systems, weak enforcement mechanisms, and inequitable governance structures, which precipitate socio-economic instability. In this study, the institutional theory was applied to document potential strategies used by Dodoma City Council to address land conflicts in the study site.

2.2 Causes of land conflicts

Despite studies having been conducted on the drivers of land conflict around the world, the existing documentation is insufficient to explain the situation in Tanzania, particularly in the peri-urban areas. In Tanzania, land conflicts have long been a critical issue, particularly in rural, urban, and peri-urban areas. Msuya (2009) highlights that in the Same District, farmers and pastoralists have clashed over land use since the 1970s, mainly due to competing demands for farming and grazing land. Farmers accuse pastoralists of allowing their cattle to graze on crops, while pastoralists claim that farmers destroy grasslands needed for their livestock. These conflicts have led to environmental degradation, including soil erosion, water pollution, and damaged infrastructure (Msuya, 2009). Mbonde (2015) identifies similar challenges in Mkoka and Songambe, where land disputes stem from land grabbing, demarcation disputes, and double leasing. These conflicts result in violence, loss of livelihoods, and reduced agricultural productivity, illustrating the broad socio-economic impact of land disputes across Tanzania.

Kironde (2019) highlights that in Dodoma, speculative land acquisitions due to the city's rapid expansion as Tanzania's administrative capital have displaced vulnerable populations, creating further tensions over land ownership and use. Speculative land grabbing, unregulated urban expansion, and governance weaknesses are key to disputes in Tanzania. Kironde (2019) notes that Dodoma's administrative transition has intensified land disputes by displacing vulnerable populations and creating tensions over ownership. Similarly, Mbonde (2015) highlights competing land-use demands in rural areas, where environmental degradation and unplanned development exacerbate community conflicts. This study was designed to identify various factors influencing land conflicts in Dodoma City.

2.3 Common Strategies for Addressing Land Conflicts

Globally, several countries have implemented legal and policy frameworks to regulate land ownership and mitigate disputes. One of the most effective approaches is the formalization of land tenure through systematic land registration and cadastral mapping (Wit, 2021). Countries such as Rwanda and Thailand have successfully reduced land conflicts by implementing nationwide land titling programmes, which provide legal recognition of ownership and reduce uncertainties over land claims (Ali et al., 2019). Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms, including mediation and arbitration, have proven effective in resolving land-related disputes outside of lengthy and costly litigation processes (Ali et al., 2019).

For instance, in Colombia, land mediation programmes have helped de-escalate conflicts and provide fair solutions for displaced communities (World Bank, 2020). In Africa, land conflicts are often linked to weak governance, overlapping tenure systems, and historical grievances. Several African nations have adopted land tenure reforms to address these challenges. Similarly, Ghana's Customary Land Secretariat (CLS) initiative integrates traditional leaders into the formal land governance framework, ensuring that local communities have a voice in land administration while improving dispute resolution mechanisms (Boone, 2020). Despite these efforts, implementation challenges remain, particularly in cases where corruption and elite land grabs undermine reform initiatives (Akinwumi, 2020).

Participatory land conflict resolution, that is, encouraging public involvement in the planning of cities, was also pinpointed as a key approach for avoiding land disputes, with emphasis placed on ensuring that all voices are heard in the decision-making process. Watson (2021) emphasises that engaging residents in zoning and urban planning processes promotes transparency and mitigates grievances concerning land. However, the implementation of participatory planning has been inconsistent, with some communities successfully engaging in planning processes, while others have been excluded due to bureaucratic barriers. Strengthening mechanisms for community participation is therefore essential to ensure that all stakeholders have a voice, as this can reduce feelings of disenfranchisement and contribute to more sustainable urban development outcomes. Rweyemamu (2020) supports this observation, arguing that inclusive governance is key to effective land dispute resolution.

Studies in Uganda (Lwanga, 2018; Kansiime, 2019; Nakayiza, 2019; Ndangiza and Turyamuhweza, 2020; Wamala, 2020; Kairuki and Daaki, 2020) agree that community-based mediation is pivotal in effectively addressing land tenure disputes, focusing on locally owned approaches through the integration of traditional practices that encourage dialogue. Furthermore, the studies agree that mediation promotes understanding and fosters peaceful coexistence in rural environments, strengthening ties between communities while addressing historical grievances to enhance ownership and security of tenure. A study by Omondi and Ochieng (2022) found similar results concerning the resolution of land conflicts. The study found that, when resolving land conflicts, the government approached local customs and traditional leaders to facilitate the mediation process.

Mediation and arbitration have emerged as the most widely used strategies for resolving land disputes, with local leaders often playing a crucial role in facilitating negotiations before formal legal action is taken. This approach aligns with the views of Best (2022) in a study

in Africa, who emphasises the importance of community-based dispute resolution mechanisms, particularly within the context of land governance in Africa. Local leaders, such as traditional elders, are often trusted by the community, making their involvement crucial in fostering amicable settlements. However, the absence of formal training for mediators can limit the fairness and consistency of these resolutions, suggesting that capacity-building programmes for local leaders could improve outcomes.

A study by Watson (2021) in Africa highlights the effectiveness of utilising established community structures to resolve conflicts. The author argues that it is important to ensure that mediators are adequately equipped to handle disputes impartially and consistently. In the case of legal and policy frameworks, these were considered important, but they face significant challenges in enforcement, primarily due to corruption and bureaucratic inefficiencies.

In Tanzania, various strategies have been implemented to manage land disputes, but challenges persist due to rapid urbanization and competing land uses. The National Land Policy of 1995 sought to address land governance issues by promoting equitable access to land, security of tenure, and legal recognition of customary land rights (URT, 2017). Additionally, Tanzania has established land tribunals and decentralized land dispute settlement bodies to provide accessible conflict resolution mechanisms. However, studies indicate that these tribunals often suffer from inefficiencies, inadequate resources, and corruption, limiting their effectiveness (Mafuru, 2020). The government has also promoted participatory land-use planning in rural and peri-urban areas, aiming to involve local communities in decision-making processes to prevent land encroachments and disputes (Malima, 2021).

Furthermore, the integration of technological solutions, such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and blockchain-based land registries, has been proposed as a way to enhance transparency and reduce fraudulent land transactions. Countries like Kenya and Ghana have begun experimenting with digital land records to improve accountability and minimize conflicts arising from unclear land ownership (Tadesse, 2021). Tanzania could benefit from similar innovations to streamline its land administration system and improve tenure security in rapidly urbanizing areas like Dodoma.

Addressing land conflicts requires a combination of legal reforms, institutional strengthening, community participation, and technological innovation. While global and African experiences provide valuable lessons, the Tanzanian context necessitates localized solutions that consider historical, social, and economic dynamics. Strengthening land governance institutions, ensuring fair dispute resolution mechanisms, and

promoting transparency in land administration are critical steps toward sustainable land conflict management. This study intends to examine various potential strategies used by Nzuguni ward to address land conflicts in Dodoma city

3. Methodology

The study was conducted in the Nzuguni ward of Dodoma City in Tanzania. Nzuguni is a peri-urban area undergoing rapid urbanisation as a result of Dodoma being designated as Tanzania's administrative capital. This transition has intensified competition for land, leading to disputes over ownership, access to, and use of land.

The study employed a case study research design to explore complex real-life phenomena. This design enabled an in-depth examination of the causes of land conflicts and strategies for addressing them in Nzuguni ward. The study population comprised all households directly or indirectly involved in, or affected by, land conflicts in Nzuguni ward. It also involved ward executive officers, street chairpersons, members of land tribunals, and community development officers based on their role in, or stake in, land conflicts. Data were collected from 98 randomly selected households using a semi-structured questionnaire, while in-depth information using the semi-structured interview guides was gathered from the ward executive officer, four street chairpersons, four members of land tribunals, and one community development officer. The interview guides varied slightly based on their respective roles in resolving land conflicts. The questionnaire and interview guides were administered face-to-face, which allowed for the clarification of any possible misconceptions. While the questionnaire allowed the researcher to gather data by directly filling in the respondents' data, data from the interview guides was collected by taking notes on the participants' responses. Descriptive analysis was used to analyse quantitative data gathered through questionnaires, while qualitative data gathered from key informants and documentary reviews were analysed using the thematic analysis method. The study adhered to ethical principles, including obtaining informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, ensuring voluntary participation and securing institutional approval for data collection from the relevant authorities.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Regarding the demographic profile of 98 respondents involved in this study, findings indicated that, in terms of gender, about 53.1% of the respondents were male, while 46.9% were female, demonstrating a fairly

balanced distribution. In terms of age, about 32.7% of respondents fell in the 26-35 years old age bracket, followed by 25.5% in the 36-45 years old. The younger participants aged between 18 and 25 years old made up 18.4%, while 15.3% were aged between 46-55 years old, and the remaining 8.1% were 56 years of age or older, reflecting strong involvement from both youth and adult populations.

Educationally, about 30.6% of respondents attained primary education, while 28.6% possessed secondary school education, followed by 18.4% who hold diplomas or higher qualifications, and 12.2% who had no formal education. Besides, the remaining 10.2% of respondents completed vocational or technical training, suggesting a relatively high literacy rate among the respondents involved. Occupation-wise, data revealed that about 35.7% identified themselves as farmers, while 20.4% identified themselves as informal sector workers, followed by 18.4% who are civil servants, and about 13.3% were unemployed. Only 12.2% were private sector employees.

Finally, regarding land ownership, the majority, accounting for 30.6% of respondents, owned land with a formal title deed, while 25.5% owned land without a title deed, and 18.4% rented land. Additionally, estimated 12.2% were landless, and 8.2% utilized family-owned land. This distribution highlights disparities in land ownership among the respondents.

These findings imply that, firstly, with the majority of respondents aged between 26–45 years, Nzuguni Ward's community consists of a productive and economically active population, suggesting rising land demand that could potentially increase competition and potential conflicts if not properly managed. Secondly, most of the respondents involved have at least primary

or secondary education, which suggests that awareness campaigns and land policy sensitization can be effectively communicated. Thirdly, most respondents in Nzuguni identified themselves as farmers (35.7%) or informal sector workers (20.4%), which demonstrates strong dependence on land for livelihoods. This underlines the need for secure land tenure systems and sustainable land-use practices to decrease vulnerability and conflicts.

Finally, the variation in land ownership, ranging from those who hold land titles (30.6%) to landless individuals (12.2%), highlights the existing disparities in access and tenure security. These differences may contribute to increasing land conflicts and alienation of certain groups from land-based economic opportunities. Overall, the findings suggest that land governance interventions in Nzuguni Ward should emphasize youth and women inclusion, tenure regularisation, livelihood diversification, and awareness programs for the residents of the area to promote equitable and sustainable land management.

4.2 Factors influencing land conflicts in Dodoma City Council

According to Geiger and Krätli (2007), a better understanding of the root causes of land disputes, whether economic, historical, or cultural, can help inform peacebuilding efforts and contribute to more sustainable and peaceful societies. This study was to identify the factors influencing land conflicts in Nzuguni Ward. During data collection, respondents were asked to indicate the key factors thought to influence land conflicts in Nzuguni ward. Table 1 represents the identified factors for land use conflicts in Nzuguni ward.

Table 1: Factors Influencing Land Conflicts

Factor	Frequency (n=98)	Percentage (%)
Rapid urbanization	75	76.53
Competing land uses	23	23.47
Weak land use planning	49	50.00
Speculative land grabbing	44	44.90
Corruption	56	57.14

Five different factors influencing land conflicts were identified. However, views and perceptions of respondents on the occurrence and magnitude of these factors differ across various respondents' profiles. The findings in Table 1 show that rapid urbanization is the leading factor influencing land conflict in Nzuguni ward, with a score of 76.53%, followed by corruption (57.14%) and weak land use planning, which scored 50.00%. Other factors were speculative land grabbing

(44.9%) and competing land uses, which scored 23.47%. Regardless of the specific causes of land conflicts, several studies (Shivji, 2021; Moyo, 2021; Zoomers, 2021; Durand-Lasserre, 2020; Lupala, 2020; Kombe, 2015) have identified rapid urbanisation, competing land uses, inadequate land use planning, land speculation, and corruption as common contributing factors. These studies have provided factor-specific

insights into the causes of land conflicts, particularly in urban and peri-urban areas.

The findings presented in Table 1 also align with those of other scholars who conducted similar studies. Concerning rapid urbanisation, Lupala (2020) highlights it as one of the causes of land conflicts that have intensified in Nzuguni Ward due to inadequate planning and infrastructure. According to Kombe (2015), rapid urbanization, as the influx of migrants seeking economic opportunities strains existing land resources, leading to overcrowding and informal settlements. The unregulated growth often results in encroachment on public or protected lands, fuelling disputes between developers and long-term residents (Kironde, 2019). The peri-urban areas are particularly affected, as urban expansion encroaches on rural farmland, leading to violent confrontations between farmers and developers.

Vlassenroot and Raeymaekers (2020) noted that land conflicts often escalate due to weak land-use planning and inadequate dispute resolution mechanisms. The author argues that without proper urban planning policies, rapid urbanization will continue to displace rural communities, exacerbating social tensions and economic inequalities. Furthermore, Sheuya (2019) documented the displacement of original landowners due to urban sprawl, which, in combination with inadequate urban planning, fuels disputes. As migration to urban areas accelerates, the competition for available land intensifies, resulting in tensions between newcomers and long-term residents.

Moreover, the lack of community participation in land-use planning exacerbates tensions, as residents feel excluded from decision-making processes (Sundet, 2020). The UN-Habitat (2018) emphasises that weak legal frameworks fail to protect vulnerable populations from forced evictions or unfair compensation. Addressing these challenges requires integrated policies that promote transparency, accountability, and inclusive urban planning (World Bank, 2021). Without such measures, land conflicts will continue to hinder socio-economic development in Nzuguni Ward.

About land use planning, various studies have reported similar findings by showing how competing land uses fuel land conflicts in urban areas. The competing interests for peri-urban land often stem from inadequate policy frameworks that fail to balance urban expansion with agricultural preservation (FAO, 2017). Weak enforcement of land use regulations allows speculative developers to encroach on farmland, displacing small-scale farmers and disrupting local food systems (Satterthwaite et al., 2020). Furthermore, the lack of integrated planning exacerbates environmental degradation, as unregulated construction encroaches on ecologically sensitive areas (Seto et al., 2016).

The marginalization of indigenous and customary land rights in formal planning processes further deepens conflicts, as communities resist top-down land allocations (Chigbu, 2019). A study by Mwathunga and Mkandawire (2018) revealed that participatory land use planning can reduce tensions by incorporating local knowledge and priorities. However, without strong institutional support, such approaches remain ineffective in addressing systemic inequities (Zoomers et al., 2017). Addressing these challenges requires robust land governance frameworks that prioritize equity, sustainability, and community engagement (Deininger, 2018).

As for competing land uses, a study by Kombe (2019) found that weak land use planning and competing land uses significantly contribute to conflicts in peri-urban areas. Insufficient planning often results in unclear boundaries between residential and agricultural land, leading to disputes between developers and farmers (Kombe, 2019). The absence of comprehensive zoning regulations exacerbates these conflicts, as land is frequently allocated without considering its long-term suitability for different uses (Durand-Lasserve, 2020). Additionally, rapid urbanization pressures peri-urban land, creating competition between housing demands and agricultural preservation (Allen, 2018). The lack of community involvement in planning processes further aggravates tensions, as local needs and traditional land rights are frequently ignored (Rakodi, 2014). This exclusionary approach fosters resentment among residents, who perceive planning decisions as favoring external investors over local stakeholders (Watson, 2014). Without inclusive and transparent planning mechanisms, conflicts over land use are likely to persist, undermining sustainable development (UN-Habitat, 2021).

Similarly, one of the key informants mentioned that:

".... rapid urbanization has created competition for land, especially as new developments are taking place. The uncontrolled expansion and absence of proper land use planning have significantly contributed to the escalation of land disputes." (Key informant, Nzuguni Ward, May 2025).

Another key informant stated:

"The increased demand for land in the area has driven individuals to grab land, often leading to conflicts, especially when regulations are poorly enforced." (Key informant, Nzuguni Ward, May 2025).

Corruption, especially among local leaders, was also highlighted as a major factor in land conflicts, with one informant explaining that:

"The sale of public land to private developers has been a significant driver of conflicts in Dodoma"

City, often without proper documentation." (Key informant, Nzuguni Ward, May 2025).

Speculative land grabbing is another factor influencing land conflicts identified in the study area. In this regard, studies have consistently reported findings on land grabbing in urban and peri-urban areas. According to Moyo (2021), speculative land grabbing, where wealthy individuals purchase land for resale at higher prices, exacerbates land conflicts, particularly in regions with weak governance and high demand for urban expansion. This practice disproportionately affects vulnerable communities, including small-scale farmers and indigenous groups, who often lack legal protections to defend their land rights (Borras et al., 2020). Hall et al. (2022) found that speculative investors frequently target peri-urban areas, where land values are expected to rise rapidly, displacing long-term residents without fair compensation. The resulting land inequality reinforces socioeconomic disparities, as marginalized groups are pushed into informal settlements with limited access to resources (Simbizi et al., 2021).

While speculative land grabbing is less widespread than corruption or urbanization, its localized impacts can be devastating, disrupting livelihoods and eroding social cohesion (Zoomers, 2021). Governments often fail to regulate these transactions effectively, allowing speculators to exploit legal loopholes (Kay, 2020). In some cases, speculative purchases are disguised as agricultural investments, further obscuring their true intent (Fairbairn, 2022). Without stronger policy interventions, this trend will continue to fuel land-related conflicts and displacement. The consequences of speculative land grabbing extend beyond immediate displacement, contributing to long-term instability and poverty in affected regions (Moyo, 2021). Research indicates that speculative practices often lead to land hoarding, where purchased plots remain undeveloped for years, depriving communities of productive use (Andreoni, 2022).

This phenomenon is particularly prevalent in Africa and Latin America, where weak land governance systems enable speculative investors to operate with minimal accountability (Deininger, 2021). Vulnerable populations, including women and ethnic minorities, are disproportionately impacted, as they are less likely to hold formal land titles (Rao et al., 2020). The lack of transparency in land transactions further complicates efforts to address these injustices, as speculators often operate through intermediaries (Simbizi et al., 2021). While some countries have introduced anti-speculation laws, enforcement remains inconsistent, allowing the practice to persist (Hall et al., 2022). Civil society organizations have called for stricter regulations,

including higher taxes on idle land and community-led land audits (Borras et al., 2020).

Addressing speculative land grabbing requires a multifaceted approach that combines legal reforms, community empowerment, and international oversight to protect the rights of marginalized groups. Corruption is another major driver of land conflict, as the demand for land near urban centers increases. Corruption manifests itself through irregular land allocations, bribery, and fraudulent transactions, exacerbating tensions among residents, particularly in the growing urban and peri-urban areas (Lupala, 2020). This aligns with studies showing that weak oversight in Tanzanian cities enables influential individuals to exploit the system for personal gain (Kironde, 2019). Without stringent penalties for corrupt officials, a cycle of injustice and mistrust persists, further destabilizing land governance (Shivji, 2021).

Shivji (2021) found that corruption further complicates the situation, as officials prioritize lucrative deals over sustainable urban development. Rapid urbanization compounds these issues by increasing competition for limited land resources, often leading to violent disputes (Kombe, 2015). The lack of transparent land administration systems worsens the situation, as residents struggle to secure legal ownership (UN-Habitat, 2018). Additionally, political interference in land allocation processes undermines public trust in local institutions (Sundet, 2020). Essentially, the systemic failures highlight the urgent need for institutional reforms to curb corruption and ensure equitable land distribution (World Bank, 2021).

With regard to this study, the analysis shows that Land conflicts in Nzuguni Ward are driven by a combination of corruption, rapid urbanization, weak land use planning, and speculative land grabbing. The findings underscore the importance of improving transparency in land transactions, enhancing urban planning, and involving communities in the planning process to reduce land-related disputes. Stronger regulations and penalties for corrupt practices are essential to mitigate land conflicts and promote fairness in land allocation and use.

4.3 Strategies Used to Address Land Conflicts in Dodoma City Council

The study examined the strategies used by Dodoma City Council to address land conflicts in Nzuguni ward. Table 2 represents the figures on the perceived effectiveness of strategies currently used by Dodoma City Council to address land conflicts in Nzuguni ward.

Table 2: Strategies Used to Address Land Conflicts in Dodoma City Council

Strategy	Frequency (n=98)	Percentage (%)
Participatory urban planning	77	78.57
Mediation and arbitration	72	73.47
Legal and policy frameworks	65	66.33
Digital land registration	28	28.57

Through this study, four potential strategies for addressing land conflicts in land conflicts in Nzuguni Ward were identified. The first strategy, which has a lot of potential to address land conflict in the study area, is the promotion of participatory urban planning, which scored 78.57% of total respondents, followed by mediation and arbitration practices, which scored 73.47% and proper enforcement of legal and policy frameworks, which scored 66.33%. The fourth strategy, which was proposed by the respondent to have potential for addressing land conflict in Nzuguni ward, is the use of digital land registration, which was mentioned by 28.57% of the total respondents interviewed through this study.

Digital land registration, though recognized for its potential to reduce fraud, remains the least adopted strategy. One key informant said that: *"while digital registration systems have the potential to reduce fraud, the lack of proper infrastructure and training remains a barrier."* (Key informant, Nzuguni Ward, May 2025). Limited technological infrastructure, as highlighted by Ali (2023), impedes the widespread implementation of digital systems. Furthermore, the divergent opinions on the feasibility of digital land registration indicate that stakeholders are uncertain about its practical application, especially without addressing underlying corruption. While digital solutions hold promise, a phased implementation approach, coupled with capacity building, would likely improve adoption rates and address some of the concerns regarding technological readiness and infrastructure. A study by Ameyaw and de Vries (2021) found that it was crucial to increasing transparency in ownership verification, minimising land conflicts and corrupt practices. The study also found that the strategy was important in enhancing the efficiency of buying and selling processes, reducing delays and the workload for the administration when accessing information.

For the case of participatory urban planning, key informants interviewed in Nzuguni ward reported that involving local communities in the planning process to address land conflicts was important. He had the following opinion: *"Participatory urban planning has proven to be one of the best ways to ensure that the community has a say in land use decisions. This approach can help mitigate future conflicts," one informant noted. This approach can help mitigate future conflicts,"* (Key informant, Nzuguni Ward, May 2025).

Participatory urban planning was also identified as a significant strategy for preventing land conflicts, with a focus on inclusive decision-making. Watson (2021) highlights that involving residents in zoning and urban planning processes fosters transparency and reduces grievances related to land. Despite this, the implementation of participatory planning showed variability, with some communities successfully engaging in planning processes while others faced exclusion due to bureaucratic barriers. Strengthening mechanisms for community participation is essential to ensure that all stakeholders have a voice, as this can reduce feelings of disenfranchisement and contribute to more sustainable urban development outcomes. This observation is supported by Rweyemamu (2020), who argues that inclusive governance is key to effective land dispute resolution, though the challenges of bureaucratic resistance cannot be overlooked.

Concerning mediation and arbitration, a key informant interviewed in Nzuguni ward reported the role of mediation and arbitration in resolving disputes. He said that: *"We have seen significant success when parties sit down and negotiate through mediation, as it tends to preserve relationships and avoid prolonged legal battles."* (Key informant, Nzuguni Ward, May 2025).

Mediation and arbitration emerged as the most widely used strategies for land dispute resolution, with local leaders often playing an essential role in facilitating negotiations before formal legal action is taken. This approach is consistent with Best (2022), who emphasizes the importance of community-based dispute resolution mechanisms, particularly in the African context of land governance. Local leaders, such as traditional elders, often carry the trust of the community, making their involvement crucial in fostering amicable settlements. However, the absence of formal training for mediators can limit the fairness and consistency of these resolutions, suggesting that capacity-building programs for local leaders could improve outcomes.

A study by Watson (2021) underscores the effectiveness of leveraging established community structures in resolving conflicts. He argued that it is important to ensure that mediators are adequately equipped to handle disputes impartially and consistently. While for the case of legal and policy

frameworks, legal and policy frameworks were considered important, they face significant challenges in enforcement, primarily due to corruption and bureaucratic inefficiencies.

Rweyemamu (2020) suggests that the weak judicial system in Tanzania exacerbates delays in land dispute resolution, eroding public confidence in formal mechanisms. The author emphasises that, despite the presence of laws, their implementation remains weak, and the public skepticism about the efficacy of legal measures is evident. Strengthening judicial capacity and reducing backlogs could enhance the effectiveness of these frameworks, as could raising public awareness about land rights to empower citizens in seeking legal redress. According to the UN-Habitat (2021), reports on the benefits of inclusivity in land planning processes. The report emphasises that inclusive and transparent planning mechanisms have the potential to minimise land use and, in turn, promote sustainable development. The World Bank (2021) adds that addressing the land-related conflicts requires integrated policies that promote transparency, accountability, and inclusive urban planning. Addressing persistent land conflicts, which often hinder socio-economic development, requires robust land governance frameworks that prioritize equity, sustainability, and community engagement (Deininger, 2018).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

Several factors were identified as key drivers of land conflicts in Nzuguni Ward, with corruption standing out as the most pervasive issue. Corrupt practices distorted fair land allocation processes, enabling well-connected individuals to bypass legal procedures and acquire land illegally. This undermined trust in local governance structures and created a system where land access depended on bribes rather than merit or need. Rapid urbanization further fuelled tensions, as the influx of people and businesses increased demand for limited land resources. Original landowners often found themselves competing with wealthy developers and investors, leading to heated disputes over ownership and usage rights.

Weak land use planning compounded these problems, as unclear boundaries and outdated records made it easy for overlapping claims to arise. The lack of proper zoning regulations also meant that residential, agricultural, and commercial areas often clashed, creating additional friction. These systemic failures created an environment where land conflicts became inevitable, with marginalized communities bearing the brunt of the instability. Another major contributor to land conflicts in Nzuguni Ward was speculative land grabbing, where wealthy individuals and corporations

acquired large tracts of land for future profit, displacing long-time residents. This practice worsened socioeconomic inequality, as poorer families were pushed out of areas they had occupied for generations.

The absence of strong legal protections for vulnerable groups left them with little recourse when their land was taken unfairly. Additionally, political interference often played a role, with officials siding with powerful interests instead of ensuring justice for all parties. The lack of transparency in land transactions further eroded public trust, as many deals were conducted behind closed doors without community input. Traditional land tenure systems, which once provided stability, were increasingly disregarded, leaving many without clear rights to their ancestral lands. These dynamics created a cycle of conflict, where disputes remained unresolved due to inefficiencies in the judicial and administrative systems. Without comprehensive reforms addressing these root causes, land conflicts in Nzuguni Ward are likely to persist, hindering development and social cohesion.

Various strategies for resolving land disputes were evaluated, whereby mediation and arbitration emerged as the most effective approaches. These methods were successful because they leveraged the high level of trust in local leaders and community-based resolution mechanisms, which fostered collaboration and mutual understanding. Mediation, in particular, allowed disputing parties to reach amicable solutions without the adversarial nature of court proceedings. Arbitration, on the other hand, provided a binding decision while still maintaining a degree of flexibility and local relevance. Both approaches were praised for their ability to preserve relationships and reduce the likelihood of future conflicts. Additionally, the study found that these methods were cost-effective and accessible, making them viable for low-income communities. However, their success relied heavily on the neutrality and competence of the mediators or arbitrators. Without proper training and oversight, the outcomes could be biased or ineffective, undermining the credibility of the process.

5.2 Recommendations

The following key recommendations were derived based on the findings of the study:

1. Participatory urban planning was also identified as a promising strategy, though its effectiveness depended on stronger community engagement and institutional support. This approach involved stakeholders in decision-making processes, ensuring that their needs and perspectives were considered in land-use plans. When implemented well, it reduced conflicts by addressing grievances early and promoting transparency. However, the study noted that many communities lacked the

resources or knowledge to participate meaningfully, leaving the process dominated by more powerful groups.

2. Legal and policy frameworks were deemed important but were often undermined by weak enforcement, corruption, and bureaucratic inefficiencies.
3. Digital land registration systems had the potential to improve transparency and reduce disputes, but they remained underutilized due to infrastructural limitations and a lack of technical capacity among officials and residents.

Without addressing these systemic challenges, even the most innovative strategies would struggle to achieve lasting impact.

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