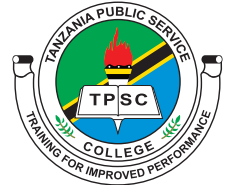




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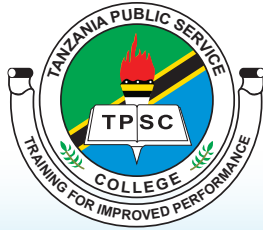
TANZANIA PUBLIC SERVICE COLLEGE

DAR ES SALAAM CAMPUS

RESEARCH REPORT ON
LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES IN ENHANCING
ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE WITHIN
THE TANZANIAN PUBLIC SECTOR:
KEY ISSUES AND THE WAY FORWARD

RESEARCH TEAM:

Ausi Nchimbi, Ernest Mabonesho, Hamisi Amani and
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Abbreviations	v
List of Tables	vi
Abstract.....	vii
Acknowledgements.....	viii

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION 1

1.1. Background Information	1
1.2. Statement of the Problem	2
1.3. Research Objectives.....	3
1.3.1. Main Research Objective.....	3
1.3.2. Specific Research Objectives	3
1.4. Research Questions.....	3
1.5. Justification of the Study.....	3

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW 5

2.1. Introduction.....	5
2.2. Public Sector Leadership Challenges: A Global and African Perspective	5
2.3. Understanding Key Concepts and Dimensions.....	7
2.3.1. Employees Motivation Challenges	7
2.3.2. Adaptability and Resilience Challenges.....	8
2.3.3. Talent Management Challenges	9
2.4. Theoretical Framework	10
2.5. Empirical Literature Review.....	11
2.5.1. Employee Motivation Challenges in Tanzanian Public Sector	11
2.5.2. Talent Management Challenges in Tanzanian Public Sector	12
2.5.3. Resilience and Adaptability Challenges for Leaders in Tanzanian Public Sector.....	12
2.6. Synthesis.....	13

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	15
3.1 Research Design	15
3.2 Study Population.....	15
3.3 Sampling Strategy and Sample Size	16
3.4 Data Collection Instrument and Strategy	17
3.5 Data Analysis	18
3.6 Ethical Considerations.....	20
3.7 Limitation of the Study.....	21
CHAPTER FOUR:PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS	23
4.1 Introduction.....	23
4.2 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents	23
4.3 Motivation Challenges in Tanzania’s Public Service	25
4.4 Talent Management Challenges in the Tanzanian Public Service	29
4.5 Adaptability and Resilience Challenges in the Tanzanian Public Service	33
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	38
5.1 Introduction.....	38
5.2 Summary of Findings.....	38
5.3 Conclusions	39
5.4 Recommendations.....	40
5.5 Areas for Future Research	43
References.....	44
Appendices.....	51

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ARC	Academic, Research and Consultancy
ATCL	Air Tanzania Company Limited
CAG	Controller and Auditor General
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CSRP	Civil Service Reform Program
HR	Human Resources
LGAs	Local Government Authorities
MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation (<i>if referenced in extended report</i>)
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
NPM	New Public Management
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PSRP	Public Service Reform Program
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TCRA	Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority
TPSC	Tanzania Public Service College
TTCL	Tanzania Telecommunications Company Limited
URT	United Republic of Tanzania

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N=43)	24
Table 4.2: Motivation Challenges in Tanzania’s Public Service	27
Table 4.3: Talent Management Challenges in Tanzania’s Public Service.....	31
Table 4.4: Adaptability and Resilience Challenges in Tanzania’s Public Service	36
Table 5.1: Summary of Key Findings and Corresponding Recommendations.....	42

ABSTRACT

This study investigated leadership challenges through the perspectives of 43 leaders drawn from Ministries, Regional Administrations, Executive Agencies, and Local Government Authorities (LGAs). Using a qualitative design and guided by Transformational Leadership Theory and New Public Management Theory, the study examined three critical domains: employee motivation, talent management, and institutional resilience. Data for this research were collected using interviews with the 43 leaders.

Findings reveal that employee motivation in the public service is narrowly equated with financial incentives, leaving public servants detached from the deeper meaning and recognition essential for engagement. Talent management practices are weak, with talented employees often perceived as threats rather than assets, mentorship is largely absent, and favouritism is undermining merit-based advancement. Institutional resilience is further weakened by frequent leadership changes, which hinder continuity and disrupt institutional capacity to sustain long-term goals.

The study concludes that Tanzania's public service is not suffering from a lack of reform or resources, but rather a lack of transformative leadership. Leaders who inspire vision, nurture talent, and provide individual support are essential to bridge the gap between bureaucratic structures and effective service delivery.

The findings clearly show that fostering transformative leadership in the public service is essential to redefine meaning, encourage innovation, and build resilient institutions that can withstand political and leadership changes. By prioritising leadership that emphasises vision, identity, and psychological safety, Tanzania can strengthen its public institutions and ensure a legacy of good governance for future generations.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background Information

Leadership is fundamental to public service. Around the world, nations face increasing demands, including economic pressures, technological disruptions, and ever-growing citizen expectations of their governments. At the heart of this struggle lies a simple truth: that is, leadership can transform institutions into engines of progress or reduce them to mere bureaucracies (Arinaldi *et al.*, 2024; Awan & Jehanzeb, 2022; Carlsen & Bruggemann, 2021).

In the African public service, the risks are even greater, as economies remain fragile, corruption persists, and public institutions are failing, making leadership the most pressing need and the greatest challenge on the continent. Revolutions have succeeded one another, often changing systems, but not mindsets (Barasa & Omariba, 2024; Muchunguzi, 2023). The fundamental question that remains is: what type of leadership is most suited to the African public service and, in particular, to Tanzania?

Tanzania's history is revealing. For decades, reform programs from the Civil Service Reform Programme (CSP) to the Public Service Reform Programmes (PSRP I and II) and the Local Government Reform Programmes (LGR I and II) promised to build a professional, efficient, and accountable public service (Msafiri, 2019). The CSP (1993-1998) aimed to reform government institutions, control the public sector payroll, and improve the efficiency of public services. The PSRP (2000-2017) aimed to institutionalise performance management systems, strengthen accountability mechanisms, and increase transparency in ministries, departments, and agencies. Similarly, the Local Public Service Reform Laws (PRCLs) were designed to promote decentralisation, delegating decision-making powers and resources to local authorities, thus improving citizen participation.

However, despite these ambitious goals, many of the same challenges persist. Wage inequality, bureaucratic red tape, and accountability failures continue to undermine the results of reforms (Gama, 2013; Kessy, 2020; Rubakula, 2023). The 2022/2023 report of the Controller and Auditor General of Tanzania did not come as a surprise to citizens; it highlighted what citizens experience every day: persistent weaknesses in financial management, project implementation delays, non-compliance with procurement procedures, and frequent audit questions in ministries, agencies, and local government authorities. The report highlighted systemic problems such as unwarranted costs, late payments, poor contract management, and weak internal controls, all of which point to leadership shortcomings that continue to erode trust, the most valuable currency of governance (CAG, 2024).

Among the many challenges, three stand out. They are not new, but they are still unresolved. These include employee motivation, talent management, and resilience in

the face of constant change. What this means in practice, however, and how it shapes the day-to-day realities of leadership, is less well understood. This research is not based solely on policy documents; it is based on the experiences of 43 leaders in ministries, regional administrations, executive agencies, and local government authorities. Their voices carry both sadness and hope. They reveal a side of leadership that is rarely captured in reform documents, a side that forces us to confront uncomfortable truths about the meaning, talent, and continuity of Tanzania's public service.

The following pages do not merely address whether leadership in Tanzania is effective in light of existing leadership challenges, but instead pursue a broader inquiry: What type of leadership will steer the public service into the next century and effectively tackle the current challenges?

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Good leadership is fundamental to organizational performance and the achievement of sustainable development goals in the Tanzanian public sector. However, despite decades of reforms aimed at improving public service delivery, performance remains variable and often inadequate (Gama, 2013). Public institutions continue to face deep-rooted challenges, including low employee morale, resistance to change, and a persistent shortage of skilled personnel (Teske *et al.*, 2024; National Audit Office of Tanzania, 2024; World Bank, 2023; Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2024). Central to these problems are three interrelated leadership challenges: employee motivation, adaptability and resilience, and talent management. Leaders face ongoing obstacles in motivating employees, often constrained by unequal pay systems, limited career growth opportunities, and inadequate recognition, which together foster low productivity, high turnover, and poor service quality (Njunwa, 2017; Mtawa, Ngowi, & Ibrahimu, 2025; Kyambade, Bartabe, Bartavuza, & Tuvazary 2; Mwakalila, 2024 Njunwa, 2017 Mashenene and Tieng'o, 2023 and Makorere & Mrisha, 2019;

Furthermore, the pace of technological change, changing policy environments, and frequent conflicts require a level of adaptability and resilience that many leaders are ill-equipped and lack the resources to demonstrate (Muchunguzi, 2023). At the same time, weaknesses in talent management manifested in the difficulty of attracting, retaining, and developing skilled employees undermines the ability of institutional and affect service delivery (Mtawa, Ngowi, & Ibrahimu, 2025; Kyambade, Bartazary, Namatovu, & Tushabe, 2024; Mboya & Mwakalila, 20202023 Tarimo2; Mashala & Kisumbe, 2020).

While these challenges are largely acknowledged in the existing literature, studies have tended to emphasize systemic or institutional shortcomings while ignoring the perspectives of those tasked with leading change. This omission is important, as the experiences of public service leaders have the potential to inform context-specific strategies that are both scientific and sustainable. By interrogating leadership challenges through the eyes of leaders themselves, this study aims

to fill a critical knowledge gap. Specifically, it examines how issues of employee motivation, adaptability and resilience, and talent management shape organizational performance in the Tanzanian public sector. In doing so, it aims not only to increase understanding but also to generate actionable knowledge that can inform change in mindset, strengthening leadership performance, and ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of public service delivery.

1.3. Research Objectives

1.3.1. Main Research Objective

To explore the key leadership challenges faced by leaders in the public service in improving organizational performance in Tanzania.

1.3.2. Specific Research Objectives

- i. To examine the key challenges associated with motivating employees within the public service.
- ii. To determine the difficulties encountered in managing talent effectively in the public service.
- iii. To assess the adaptability and resilience of public service leaders in response to rapid changes within the public sector.

1.4. Research Questions

- i. What are the key challenges associated with motivating employees within the public service?
- ii. What difficulties are encountered in managing talent effectively in the public service?
- iii. How adaptable and resilient are public service leaders in responding to rapid changes within the public sector?

1.5. Justification of the Study

The rationale for this study is based on the critical role of effective leadership in the development of Tanzania's public service and its ability to drive organizational performance, provide quality service, and advance the country's long-term development aspirations. While successive reforms seek to strengthen institutional capacity, evidence continues to show that public performance remains inadequate (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2024). The persistent discrepancy between reform aspirations and institutional achievements highlights the importance of analyzing leadership not only as a bureaucratic activity, but as a critical mode of national transformation.

This study aligns with Tanzania's Vision 2050, which places strong, ethical, and effective leadership at the heart of the country's strategy to become an inclusive,

competitive, and resilient upper-middle-income economy. Vision 2050 highlights strong institutions, human capital development, technological adaptation, and modern, service-oriented public services as the pillars of national development. Similarly, the Five-Year National Development Plan (FYDP III) prioritizes institutional strengthening, accountability, digital transformation, and strategic leadership, all key elements for accelerating socio-economic development. By focusing on empowerment, talent management, adaptation, and resilience, recognizing the importance of human and institutional capacity, this study directly contributes to the implementation of the 2050 governance goals and social change agenda.

Not doing this study has serious consequences. Without a comprehensive understanding of the leadership challenges facing the Tanzanian public service, the country risks continuing to implement reforms that promise on paper but may not be delivered. Ongoing shortages of energy, talent development, and strategic development will continue to weaken institutions, delay policy implementation, and erode public trust. The country's key priorities, such as digital governance, improved public services, industrialization, and human capital development, are vulnerable to leadership gaps and weaknesses. Ultimately, failure to address these leadership challenges limits Tanzania's ability to achieve its Vision 2050 goals, undermining efforts to build a resilient, innovative, and inclusive public service.

Equally significant is the absence of systematic research that systematically documents these challenges from the viewpoint of public service leaders themselves. Their lived experiences, situated where national policy intersects with institutional reality, remain unexplored. This study fills this gap by drawing on and analyzing these insights and generating evidence that is both academically rigorous and practically transformative. In doing so, it contributes to leadership development, informs policy discourse, and strengthens the institutional foundations necessary for Tanzania to deliver on Vision 2050 commitments.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The role of leadership in the public sector is not just administrative, it is transformative. In Tanzania, where the burden of national development rests on the shoulders of public service leaders, the quality of leadership determines whether institutions become engines of development or remain in stagnation. Therefore, good leadership is essential in overcoming prevailing challenges and in enhancing organizational performance, fostering accountability, and guiding the country towards its aspirations for sustainable development.

However, leadership in the Tanzanian public service operates in a challenging environment. Financial constraints, political turmoil, and societal expectations push leaders to their limits. Beyond systems and reforms, it is the leaders themselves, their vision, adaptability, and ability to inspire, that ultimately create results.

This chapter provides a comprehensive analysis of the literature on leadership challenges in the Tanzanian public service. It examines three areas that repeatedly emerge as important but problematic: employee motivation, adaptability and resilience, and talent management. Together, these themes reveal hidden weaknesses that undermine institutional performance and erode public trust. By examining these challenges through scholarly analysis and contextual practicality, this study lays the foundation for a broader question: What kind of leadership does Tanzania really need to build a high-performing and sustainable public service?

2.2. Public Sector Leadership Challenges: A Global and African Perspective

Public sector leadership today is at a crossroads. Across the world, leaders face a landscape of complexity, unpredictability, and unwavering public expectations. They are called upon to deliver efficiency with limited resources, manage the pressures of globalization, and maintain accountability within a complex policy environment (Arinaldi *et al.*, 2024). The task is not just administrative, it is existential. Leadership now determines whether institutions transform into dynamic enablers of development or remain static remnants of the past.

The forces that are transforming governance are vast. Accelerating digital technologies have opened up unexpected opportunities for service innovation and transparency, but they have also exposed governments to cybersecurity threats, deepened the digital divide, and raised ethical dilemmas about privacy and data surveillance (Mergel, 2018; Shibambu, 2024; Nuryadin *et al.*, 2023). At the same time, globalization has blurred national boundaries, forcing leaders to respond to global issues while preserving domestic accountability (OECD, 2021). However, despite

these claims, entrenched bureaucratic complexity and resistance to change continue to stifle innovation, slowing the adoption of flexible and collaborative approaches essential for digital and organizational transformation.

In Africa, these global challenges are compounded by historical, political, and socio-economic realities. Weak institutions, corruption, and political instability have often undermined the promise of reforms (Ikeke, 2024; Mkhize, Moyo, & Mahoa, 2024). Decentralization and capacity-building programs, while well-intentioned, have yielded mixed results, often undermined by funding, resistance to change, and systemic inefficiencies (African Development Bank, 2020). As Moyo (2015) observes, the conflict between political loyalty and professional competence has reinforced appointments that prioritize loyalty over competence, undermining the foundations of an effective public service.

Leadership development itself remains an under-invested priority across the continent (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). As seen and Pontian and Mgaya (2015), without intentionally developing leadership capacity, the public sector will remain ill-equipped to design and implement innovative solutions. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed this shortcoming, exposing weaknesses in preparedness, coordination, and adaptive leadership in many African countries (Eneanya et al., 2025; Ndemi & Foláyan, 2025). The puzzle is clear: Leadership has never been more needed, yet never has it been so poorly developed, with Tanzania demonstrating these tensions.

Despite major initiatives including the Civil Service Reform Program (CSRPs) and Public Service Reform Programs (PSRPs), the country continues to struggle with corruption, wage disparities, and a poor working environment. (Lufunyo, 2013; Rugumyambeto, 2004). What is known as “Ineffective Implementation” (URT, 2023; Society for International Development, 2024), describes this problem: Well-designed policies fade in the implementation phase, leaving institutions underperforming and citizens disappointed. While the development of leadership capacity has been repeatedly emphasized, it has not kept pace with the complexity of governance, leading to gaps in service delivery and declining trust (Ridder *et al.*, 2015).

In this context, three interrelated challenges emerge as key dimensions of leadership in the Tanzanian public service and these are staff motivation, adaptability and resilience, and talent management. These are not technical problems but rather structural and human disruptions that determine whether leaders can build institutions capable of serving citizens effectively, fairly, and with vision. Understanding their causes and consequences is important, not just for Tanzania but for any society that wants to rethink the future of public leadership.

The following sections go into more detail as they explore these challenges as the dynamic boundaries of leadership in Tanzania, the spaces that the public service must reinvent or risk becoming stagnant.

2.3. Understanding Key Concepts and Dimensions

2.3.1. Employees Motivation Challenges

Transformational leadership theory suggests that employee motivation is essential for organizational success, especially in the public sector, where the workforce is the backbone of essential service delivery. However, in Tanzania, public service leaders face ongoing challenges in maintaining and increasing employee motivation. Several interrelated factors contribute to this challenge, most notably unequal pay scales, limited opportunities for professional development, and poor recognition of employee contributions. Public servants often report feeling undervalued, with compensation that does not match their workload and rising costs of living (Njunwa, 2017). This sense of inequity is worsened by the perception that promotions and salary increases are often determined by favouritism or political considerations rather than merit (Mtawa, Ngowi, & Ibrahimu, 2025; Mboya & Mwakalila, 2024).

Another important factor is limited access to professional development opportunities. Many public servants lack access to structured training, mentoring, and professional development programs that can enhance their skills and pave the way for advancement, as explicitly suggested by transformational leadership theory. This stagnation leads to frustration and disengagement, as employees see few opportunities for advancement within the service (Kyambade, Bartazary, & Namatovu, 2024). The absence of effective systems to recognize and reward hard work aggravates the problem. When efforts go unrecognized, morale declines, and employees become increasingly disengaged from organizational goals (Kyambade, Bartazary, Namatovu, & Tushabe, 2024).

The consequences of this lack of motivation are widespread in the public service. At the organizational level, low motivation translates into low productivity, delays, inefficiency, and failure to meet performance targets (Njunwa, 2017). Major changes intensify these challenges, as undervalued employees seek better opportunities elsewhere. This not only disrupts organizational continuity but also increases recruitment and training costs, creating significant skills gaps that reduce institutional capacity (Mtawa, Ngowi, and Ibrahimu, 2025; Mboya and Mwakalila, 2024).

The impact is most evident at the service delivery level. In sectors such as health, education, and infrastructure, outcomes for citizens depend heavily on the commitment of frontline workers. A depleted workforce leads to long waiting times, limited access to services, and poor outcomes for citizens (Kyambade, Bartazary, and Namatovu, 2024). This erosion of quality undermines public trust and fuels a vicious cycle of disengagement, further weakening institutional performance.

For leaders, the stakes are high. Motivational challenges place significant strain on their ability to lead effectively. Leaders who fail to address these issues risk alienating their teams, losing credibility, and reducing their authority. On the other hand, leaders who foster motivation by ensuring fairness, providing recognition, and fostering meaning are in a better position to encourage excellence, stimulate innovation, and

build strong institutions (Kyambade, Bartazary, Namatovu, & Tushabe, 2024). From this perspective, employee motivation is not only considered a human resource concern but also a test of leadership ability within the Tanzanian public service.

2.3.2. Adaptability and Resilience Challenges

The public service environment is constantly changing, shaped by technological disruption, shifting political priorities, and unexpected conflicts. In such an unpredictable environment, adaptability and resilience are not secondary skills, but fundamental pillars of effective leadership (Ndossy, 2025). Leaders must not only adapt to change, but also embrace innovation and lead their organizations with resilience amidst disorder. However, in Tanzania, many public service leaders struggle to develop these qualities, hampered by internal weaknesses and external crises (Muchunguzi, 2023). Internally, bureaucratic complexity, limited access to leadership training, and chronic resource constraints hinder change. Hierarchical structures often discourage change, slow decision-making, and stifle innovation. Professional development opportunities in areas such as change management, crisis response, and technology integration are limited, leaving leaders ill-prepared for the demands of a rapidly evolving public service environment (Muchunguzi, 2023). Externally, the pace of global change intensifies these vulnerabilities. Rapid technological advancements, shifting political agendas and crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic have created a climate of constant uncertainty (Ndossy, 2025). Leaders are often tasked with delivering results with reduced budgets, staff shortages, and outdated infrastructure. These pressures, coupled with a lack of institutional support for mental health and well-being, often lead to burnout, low morale, and weak resilience.

The consequences are profound. At the leadership level, a lack of adaptability manifests as poor decision-making, as leaders struggle to respond effectively to new information or changing circumstances. This erodes their credibility and weakens their ability to inspire trust among employees and stakeholders (Muchunguzi, 2023). At the organizational level, inflexibility leads to stagnation: reforms stall, technology goes unused, and service delivery declines. Nowhere is this more damaging than in key sectors such as health and education, where the inability to change directly impacts citizens' well-being (Ndossy, 2025).

The absence of resilient and strong leadership also undermines public trust. When leaders fail to guide institutions during crises whether natural disasters, economic downturns, or public health emergencies existing inequalities widen and vulnerabilities increase. Citizens experience not only poor service but also a growing sense of abandonment, further eroding trust in government institutions.

To meet the demands of the 21st century, Tanzania's public service must develop leaders who can adapt without faltering, leaders who can turn disruption into opportunity, maintain high morale in the face of adversity, and instil a culture of innovation and continuous improvement. Without such resilience, institutional risk becomes rigid, unable to withstand the pressures it was designed to manage.

2.3.3. Talent Management Challenges

Talent management, the ability to attract, retain, and develop skilled employees is the engine of organizational success. In Tanzania's public, this system is not functioning well. Persistent shortcomings in talent management undermine institutional capacity, impair service delivery, and inhibit leadership, which is essential for sustainable governance.

In the initial stages, the public sector struggles to attract top talent. Compensation packages are lower than those in the private sector, the work environment is not very competitive, and career development opportunities are limited (Njunwa, 2017). Slow and bureaucratic recruitment processes increasingly discourage highly skilled professionals, making the public service unattractive to those who can drive innovation and change.

Retaining staff is also a complex challenge. Skilled workers often leave the system due to instability in their career development, insufficient recognition, and salaries that do not match their responsibilities or the cost of living (Mtawa, Ngowi, and Ibrahimu, 2025; Mboya & Mwakalila, 2024). This leads to high staff turnover, resulting in significant changes, disrupting organizational continuity, and increasing recruitment and training costs.

The absence of transparent career development pathways and performance-based incentives aggravates disengagement, leaving many employees with no reason to commit long-term (Kyambade, Bartazary, and Namatovu, 2024). Talent development within the system is even more deficient. Limited resources, outdated infrastructure and training methods, and the lack of a strategic framework for identifying and nurturing high-potential employees have left institutions ill-prepared to build a future-proof leadership system (Kyambade, Bartazary, Namatovu, and Tushabe, 2024). Workers lack access to mentorship, practical training, and lifelong learning opportunities that would enable them to address emerging challenges (ibid). The result is an underutilized, ill-prepared, and undervalued workforce.

The effects of poor talent management extend to all levels of governance. At the leadership level, skills shortages increase workload, burnout, and reduce leader effectiveness. At the organizational level, low retention disrupts continuity, while a lack of experience reduces institutional performance. Most importantly, in service delivery, the consequences fall on the citizens themselves: long hospital waiting times, declining quality of education, and deficient infrastructure systems (Mtawa, Ngowi, and Ibrahimu, 2025; Mboya & Mwakalila, 2024). A shortage of health professionals translates into poor health outcomes, while a lack of qualified teachers affects the quality of education and, ultimately, national development.

In this context, talent management is not merely an administrative matter, but a strategic imperative. Without deliberate investment in the recruitment, retention, and development of employees, Tanzania's public administration will continue to struggle with inefficiency and a loss of public trust.

On the other hand, if the public administration views talent as its most important asset, it can build stronger institutions, foster innovation, and retain the skilled personnel needed to achieve the country's sustainable development goals and its 2050 development vision.

2.4. Theoretical Framework

This study is based on two related theories: Transformational Leadership and New Public Management (NPM). Together, they provide a useful framework for understanding the leadership challenges in Tanzanian public service and broader changes in governance.

Transformational Leadership Theory, initially formulated by James MacGregor Burns (1978) and expanded by Bernard Bass, emphasizes a leader's ability to inspire, motivate, and guide followers toward extraordinary results (Bass & Riggio, 2006). At the heart of this theory are four dimensions: greater influence, motivation, intellectual stimulation, and personal focus (Avolio & Bass, 2002). In the public sector, these dimensions are important because leadership must go beyond technical management to foster meaning, trust, and a shared vision. Anecdotal evidence underscores their importance: Trottier et al. (2008) linked transformational leadership with greater employee satisfaction and organisational effectiveness observed in U.S. federal agencies, while Wright and Pandey (2010) demonstrated its positive relationship with mission clarity, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment.

New Public Management (NPM) theory emerged in the 1980s from perceived weaknesses in traditional bureaucratic systems (Hood, 1991). By promoting the adoption of private-sector principles, NPM emphasizes decentralization, performance measurement, customer focus, market systems, and accountability for results (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017). Its international influence has been significant, inspiring reforms such as the UK's Next Steps program and New Zealand's State Sector Act of 1988 (Boston *et al.*, 1996). In developing countries, such as Tanzania, New Public Management (NPM) has shaped reform agendas, but with mixed results due to weak institutional capacity, political interference, corruption, and a poor performance-oriented culture (Manning, 2001).

Integrating these two frameworks provides a broader perspective. Transformational leadership brings a human and motivational dimension that is often lacking in structural reforms, while NPM provides tools for effectiveness and accountability. As Van Wart (2013) points out, transformational leadership is particularly important in times of major transformation, as it helps leaders overcome resistance and generate commitment to new actions. Together, these theories highlight the dual importance of systemic reform and people-centered leadership.

However, contextual realities must guide their application. Tanzania's experience with the so-called "Recognition of Inadequate Implementation" (Rugeiyamu, 2024) shows

that reforms fail without leaders capable of instigating real change and mobilizing collective energy. Similarly, Grindle (2004) cautions that the principles of New Public Management (NPM) must be adapted to the socio-political context of developing countries, rather than being generically imported.

Drawing on the dual perspectives of transformational leadership and NPM, this study provides a broader understanding of leadership challenges in Tanzania. Importantly, it positions leadership not simply as an administrative function, but as a strategic catalyst for organizational renewal and public trust. This approach aligns with the growing call for leader-centered and context-specific research in African public administration (Gutterman, 2023).

2.5. Empirical Literature Review

2.5.1. Employee Motivation Challenges in Tanzanian Public Sector

Empirical research on Tanzanian public institutions shows that employee performance is influenced by both financial and non-financial incentives. However, their efficiency is often limited by systemic, organizational, and leadership challenges. Njunwa (2024) conducted a study in the Mvomero District Council, demonstrating that financial incentives, career growth opportunities, and adequate resources are important motivators, especially for lower-level employees, while internal and non-financial factors remain understudied.

Similarly, Mtawa *et al.* (2024) studied the Njombe District Council and identified salary, benefits, training, and professional development as key factors for retention, highlighting the shortcomings of incentives without strong leadership support. Mboya and Mwakalila (2024) focused on the Dar es Salaam City Council and demonstrated that low salaries, weak leadership, delayed promotions, and inadequate infrastructure contribute to high turnover rates, suggesting that incentives alone cannot sustain performance without addressing major organisational deficiencies.

Kyambade *et al.*, (2024) studied public servants in Kigoma/Ujiji Municipality, and Mashenene and Tieng'o (2023) examined Tabora Municipal Council, both showing that non-monetary incentives such as recognition, training, trust, and empowerment can increase performance when integrated into actual management practices, although their effects are limited by narrow contexts and systemic constraints.

Finally, Makorere and Mrisha (2019) examined public schools in Morogoro Township, revealing that even well-intentioned incentive programs are undermined by mismanagement, lack of funding, poor implementation, and political interference.

Taken together, these studies show that both financial and non-financial incentives affect motivation and performance, but their effectiveness is often limited by systemic, organizational, and leadership constraints. Financial incentives alone are insufficient, while non-financial strategies require proper implementation, equity, and supportive leadership.

2.5.2. Talent Management Challenges in Tanzanian Public Sector

Empirical studies on talent management in Tanzania and the wider East African context highlight its important role in employee retention, development, and organizational performance. However, they often focus on isolated institutions or sectors rather than systemic challenges that affect the entire sector.

Mzava and Tarimo (2023) studied the headquarters of CRDB Bank PLC and found that talent acquisition and reward strategies significantly improved employee retention, suggesting improved reward systems for skilled employees. Similarly, Mzava and Ngirwa (2023), also at CRDB Bank, showed that career development and succession planning positively affected retention, emphasizing the importance of a structured talent development process.

Victor (2025) studied the Institute of Judicial Administration (IJA) in Tanzania, showing that staff development programs, including training, workshops, job rotation, and seminars, improve talent, job satisfaction, and performance, although implementation challenges such as limited budgets and senior executives' preferences hinder their effectiveness.

In the public sector, Mashala and Kisumbe (2020) examined three local government authorities (Kigoma, Kasulu, and Mkuranga municipal councils) and found that training, staff engagement, leadership development, and strategic hiring positively affected leadership quality, demonstrating a link between talent development and leadership effectiveness. Mtinda (2019), focusing on the Tanzania Public Service College, reported that poor succession planning, inadequate training, and poor professional development negatively affected performance, indicating systemic weaknesses in talent management practices.

Collectively, these studies show that while talent acquisition, development, and succession planning positively impact retention, leadership quality, and performance, their impact is often mitigated by tight budgets, poor implementation, institutional silos, and narrow focus on individual organizations.

2.5.3. Resilience and Adaptability Challenges for Leaders in the Tanzanian Public Sector

Empirical research highlights resilience and adaptability as key challenges for leaders in public and semi-public institutions, impacting overall organizational performance. In Tanzania, few studies have examined these specific issues, limiting the available empirical evidence. Costantine, Mwinjuma, and Nemes (2025) examined factors that promote resilience among teachers in selected secondary schools in Morogoro Township, Tanzania, and found that mentoring, guidance, and work-life balance significantly increase individual resilience. While this study provides valuable empirical insights, it focuses on individual resilience, leaving a gap in understanding how leadership strategies can promote systemic resilience and adaptability in public institutions.

Due to the scarcity of studies in Tanzania, perspectives from other contexts are also considered. Dajani (2022) examined adaptive leadership and organizational resilience in an Egyptian context, demonstrating that adaptive leadership significantly improves resilience and that planned change management acts as a mediator. The study demonstrates how adaptive leadership and change processes contribute to organizational survival during crises. However, its application is limited by its geographic focus, reliance on self-reported data, and focus on a single leadership system, highlighting the need for research in more context-sensitive and resource-constrained settings, such as Tanzania.

Țiclău, Hințea, and Trofin (2021) examined adaptive leadership in international conflict contexts, interviewing women leaders from the private and non-profit sectors. The study highlights resilience as a key leadership trait for effective conflict management, influenced by regulatory pressures, government intervention, and financial constraints. However, the small, sector-specific sample limits generalizability, and the study does not thoroughly examine contextual factors such as leadership style, institutional culture, or resource availability.

Taken together, these studies suggest that resilience and adaptability are essential for effective leadership, but research in Tanzania remains limited. There is a significant gap in understanding how Tanzanian public sector leaders can foster organizational resilience and adaptability across multiple institutions, particularly when dealing with challenges such as talent management, employee motivation, and governance constraints.

2.6. Synthesis

While the literature documents the various challenges facing the Tanzanian public sector, a significant gap persists in understanding and analysing them. Much of the existing research emphasizes systemic deficiencies and institutional weaknesses, such as bureaucracy, resource constraints, corruption, or political distortions. While important, this perspective often ignores the realities of those who lead these institutions. As a result, the voices, judgments, frustrations, and evolving strategies of public service leaders remain underrepresented in academic and policy debates.

Researches on employee motivation, talent management and resilience/adaptability highlight that these areas continue to present persistent constraints for Tanzanian public sector leaders and significantly hinder organizational performance. However, interventions designed to address these challenges are often implemented ineffectively, as research in this area has remained fragmented. Much of the existing research consists of case studies focused on a single institution or sector, examining only individual challenges. This limited approach obscures how motivation, talent management, and adaptability interact to determine leadership effectiveness and organizational outcomes. The lack of integrated research hinders the development of comprehensive and contextualized leadership strategies.

Also, significant is the insufficient attention paid to the lived experiences of public sector leaders themselves. These leaders face daily operational pressures, manage conflicting expectations, navigate unpredictable political environments, and must reconcile the demands of change with the realities of institutional culture. Their perspectives are crucial for identifying practical constraints, systemic barriers, and opportunities for meaningful improvement. However, their perspectives rarely influence the dominant narrative on public sector performance or the design of reform interventions, thus creating disconnection between policy prescriptions and leadership practice.

Addressing this gap is crucial. Without understanding how leaders experience and interpret challenges, any reform effort risks becoming generalized, externalized, or disconnected from the organization's actual needs. Therefore, this study addresses the identified gap by focusing on the experiences of Tanzanian public service leaders and examining employee motivation, talent management, and resilience not as isolated concepts, but as interrelated factors that shape leadership capabilities. Through this holistic approach, this study provides contextualized and specific insights that can inform effective actions, practices, and strategies for strengthening leadership and improving organizational performance in Tanzanian public institutions.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative research design based on thematic analysis to examine the leadership challenges facing the Tanzanian public service and their implications for institutional effectiveness. The choice of thematic analysis was deliberate, as it provides the methodological depth needed to capture the richness of participants' experiences and identify recurring patterns and themes within complex qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The nature of this research design is fully aligned with the research objectives. Leadership practices in the public sector are multifaceted and are determined by structural constraints and individual agency. The qualitative approach, with its openness and flexibility, allowed insights to emerge compellingly from participants' narratives, rather than being confined to pre-defined categories. This ensured that the results were based on the real perspectives of the leaders themselves, reflecting the reality of motivation, adaptability, and talent management as practiced.

By prioritizing voice and context, the framework provided a better understanding of how leadership challenges interact with organizational performance. More importantly, it provided evidence that can inform leadership development and institutional strengthening strategies, providing both academic value and practical relevance.

3.2 Study Population

In practice, this study involved directors, deputy directors and heads of departments from Ministries, Government Departments, and Executive Agencies (MDAs), as well as Local Government Authorities (GALs). These leaders hold a key position within the Tanzanian administrative hierarchy: they are directly responsible for translating policy into action, managing teams, shaping organizational culture, and sustaining day-to-day operations. As the gatekeepers of operational leadership, they address the practical dimensions of motivation, change, and talent management in a timely, visible, and highly relevant manner. Their closeness to employees and organizational processes made them well-suited to reflecting the realities of leadership within the public service institutions that often remain invisible at the highest levels of administration.

It is also important to address the portion of the target population that did not participate. Senior executives such as Permanent Secretaries, Regional Commissioners, and Secretaries of Regional Administration (SARs) were contacted through formal procedures but ultimately were not included in the study. Despite repeated efforts to engage participants, their participation was limited by tight schedules, institutional

constraints, and a lack of receptivity to research activities during the data collection period. This absence does not reflect methodological incompetence but rather reflects a structural feature of Tanzanian public service in which research is not systematically recognized as an integral part of governance, organizational learning, or leadership development. Access to senior officials is often blocked, delayed, or ignored, thereby limiting opportunities for empirical investigation and reducing the potential contribution of research to reform processes and decision-making.

For this reason, the number of researchers represents the voices of those who participated and the silent but significant absence of those who did not participate. This silence is analytically significant. It points to the need for a more research-friendly culture within the public service, one that treats empirical evidence not as an inconvenience but as a strategic asset. A public sector that embraces research develops institutional memory, strengthens accountability, accelerates reform, and lays the foundation for informed decision-making. As Tanzania continues to pursue ambitious development goals and governance, integrating research into the public service performance framework becomes not only beneficial but also essential.

3.3 Sampling Strategy and Sample Size

This study employed a purposive sampling strategy designed to reach a broad range of knowledgeable participants who could reflect the practical realities of leadership in the Tanzanian public service. The sample design included the entire range of public sector leadership, from the highest levels of administrative authority to the operational and management levels where policies are translated into action. Therefore, the study initially focused on senior national leaders, such as permanent secretaries, regional commissioners, and regional administrative secretaries, as well as directors, deputy directors, department heads, and section heads from selected ministries, local government authorities, and government organizations. This broad design was intentional: the challenges of leadership in motivation, adaptability, and talent management are multidimensional phenomena that manifest differently at various organizational levels, and a comprehensive sample was needed to capture this complexity.

However, the resulting sample reflected the actual availability within the Tanzanian public service. The study successfully interviewed 43 leaders from ministries, local government authorities, and public organizations. These individuals held positions such as director, deputy director, department head, and section head. Although positioned below the senior executive level, these leaders are responsible for managing teams, implementing reforms, monitoring performance, and translating national directives into organizational contexts. Therefore, their perspectives provided a deep and informed understanding of the leadership challenges that directly impact organizational outcomes.

At the institutional level, participants included the Office of the President – Public Service Management and Good Governance, the Ministry of Health, the Ilala Municipal Council, the Mbeya City Council, the Lindi District Council, and Tanzania Communications Company Limited. These institutions were not only readily available but also strategically important. They represent the public service human resource management system, large-scale service delivery systems, decentralized governance, and state-owned enterprises undergoing technological change and public accountability. Geographically, the inclusion of Dar es Salaam, Mbeya, and Lindi ensured that the sample captured the realities of leadership in economic centres, mixed urban and rural regions, and peripheral areas. Taken together, these institutions and participants allowed the research to reach a thematic level, although the final interviews did not contribute new conceptual insights. This provided a solid empirical basis for analysing the leadership challenges facing the Tanzanian public service.

3.4 Data Collection Instrument and Strategy

This study used semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection tool. Semi-structured interviews are well suited for qualitative research on complex organizational and behavioural phenomena, as they provide a structured research framework while maintaining the flexibility needed to explore participants' experiences in depth. Their use was appropriate for this study's focus on leadership challenges within the Tanzanian public service, where issues such as motivation, adaptability/resilience, and talent management are multifaceted and context-dependent. The design allowed the researcher to address pre-planned topic areas while still capturing emerging perspectives, which added to the richness and authenticity of the data (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018; Galletta, 2020).

The interview guide was carefully developed to reflect the research objectives and draw on existing literature on public sector leadership, organizational behaviour, and transformational dynamics. The questions were open-ended to encourage broad reflection and allow participants to express their perspectives in their own words. This design allowed the researcher to capture nuances of experience that structured surveys or rigid interview formats would have missed. Through this approach, participants were invited to discuss not only the challenges they perceived within their institutions, but also the organizational cultures, expectations, and pressures that shape public sector leadership practice.

Interviews were conducted face-to-face to foster trust and facilitate more in-depth, participatory conversations. Each interview lasted approximately 20 to 30 minutes, giving participants ample time to explore their experiences without overwhelming their academic schedules. Interviews were scheduled according to a pre-planned strategy: appointments were arranged in advance through formal communication with institutional offices, ensuring that interviews were consistent with participants'

availability and workplace protocols. Interviews were conducted at the workplace in participants' offices or designated meeting spaces, which helped to situate the conversations within the context of the organizations studied. This approach also contributed to contextual sensitivity, allowing the researcher to explore institutional contexts and dynamics that enhanced the translation process.

With the participants' permission, some interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accurate transcription and to facilitate in-depth and systematic analysis. In cases where recording was not possible or preferred, detailed field notes were taken. Additional field notes were transcribed immediately after each interview to capture nonverbal cues, contextual observations, and the researcher's initial impressions of the analysis which forms an important part of reflective qualitative research.

Data collection continued until thematic saturation was achieved. This theme exhaustion was determined through an iterative process in which interview transcripts and field notes were reviewed repeatedly, along with emerging patterns. As the interviews progressed, the emergence of similar themes, descriptions, and leadership challenges indicated that further interviews were no longer yielding new conceptual insights. By the final stages of data collection, the narratives had settled around clear patterns related to motivation, adaptability, and talent management. This emergence of major themes across institutions and regions demonstrated that the data set was rich, comprehensive, and analytically sound for rigorous thematic analysis.

To enhance the credibility, reliability, and depth of the research analysis, documentary evidence was also reviewed. This included public service reform strategies, policy documents, institutional reports, and audit findings related to leadership, organizational performance, and human resource management in Tanzania. The inclusion of documentary sources served a threefold purpose: it enabled cross-validation of interview data, identification of common themes, and classification of participants' narratives into broad national governance styles. This multi-source approach enhanced the robustness of the research methods and contributed to a broader understanding of the leadership dynamics that shape them.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data analysis was based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) Thematic Analysis Framework, a recognized and vigorous method for identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns in qualitative data. Thematic analysis was selected for its theoretical flexibility and its ability to provide comprehensive and detailed descriptions of participants' lived experiences, a method consistent with the research objectives of this study. For clarity, the analysis is presented in six phases:

Braun and Clarke's Six-Phase Thematic Analysis Framework include: data familiarization, initial coding, theme search, theme exploration, theme definition and

naming, and report writing. This structured approach provided a systematic way to move from raw interview material to meaningful and conceptually grounded themes concerning leadership challenges in Tanzanian public service.

The first phase was conducted through repeated reading of interview transcripts, listening to audio recordings when available, and reviewing field notes. This absorption allowed researchers to understand not only the explicit content of participants' responses but also the tone, context, and emotions that shaped their reflections. In the context of this study, this understanding was important because leadership challenges often emerged implicitly in narratives about organizational culture, resource constraints, and behavioural expectations.

In the second phase, initial codes were systematically developed across the entire dataset. Coding was done manually to allow for close interaction with the material and to maintain sensitivity to the nuances of language, institutional contexts, and the meanings participants attributed to their experiences. For this study, the codes captured specific leadership concerns such as "lack of perspective," "limited consultation," "political uncertainty," "frequent leadership changes," "burnout," and "fear of speaking up." These codes represented the building blocks from which broader patterns could be identified.

The third phase involved organizing related codes into potential themes. During this stage, the researcher examined how the coded sections interacted and integrated around shared meanings. For example, codes related to work pressure, complex structures, and slow decision-making were integrated into the overarching themes of adaptability and resilience. Similarly, codes related to financial anxiety, cognitive deficits, and emotional disengagement were integrated into motivational challenges. The transition from codes to themes required interpretive judgment, guided by the research objectives and the realities of the Tanzanian public sector context.

In the fourth phase, the themes were carefully reviewed and refined. This process involved assessing whether the themes accurately captured the essence of the coded data and whether their boundaries were clear. Weak or overlapping themes were merged, reworked, or discarded. For this study, theme exploration was particularly important because leadership challenges did not always emerge as isolated problems; they were often intertwined with structural, cultural, or human resource dynamics. Ensuring the clarity of the themes allowed the analysis to respect this complexity while maintaining its coherence.

The fifth phase consisted of defining and naming the themes. In this phase, the researcher explained the basic meaning, scope, and contribution of each theme to the analysis. Themes such as "Challenges to Motivation," "The Stress of Talent Management," and "Changing Pressures on Leadership" were chosen to reflect the realities of the participants and the conceptual debates in the public service literature. Defining the themes also required reviewing the data to ensure that each theme presented a coherent and compelling narrative which is supported by evidence.

The final phase involved integrating themes into an analytical narrative. This step connected individual experiences with broader organizational and governance contexts, demonstrating how the identified themes reflect systemic patterns within the Tanzanian public service. The thematic findings not only summarized participants' explanations but also provided an interpretive framework that linked empirical perspectives with theoretical concepts such as leadership capacity, organizational behaviour, and public sector reform.

Through this structured and iterative process, thematic analysis enabled the study to produce robust analytical findings grounded in the perspectives of public service leaders. The resulting thematic map provided a clear and coherent understanding of the leadership challenges shaping organizational performance in the Tanzanian public sector.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical integrity was essential in the design and implementation of this study, especially given the participation of public service leaders, whose perspectives are important both institutionally and personally. The study adhered to established principles of dignity, privacy, and confidentiality, ensuring that participation was voluntary and respectful.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their participation. The informed consent form explained the study's objectives, procedures, potential risks, and anticipated benefits. Participants were clearly informed of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty, a safeguard designed to enhance independence and integrity.

Strict data confidentiality and security were maintained. All interview recordings were stored in a secure internal repository, accessible only to the research team. During transcription, all personal identities were removed, and pseudonyms were used in all reports and publications. This process ensured the protection of participants' identities throughout the research cycle.

The study also prioritized the emotional well-being of the participants. Given the potential sensitivity of leadership-related conversations, interviews were conducted in a supportive environment designed to encourage openness and minimize interruptions. When participants showed signs of fatigue or distress, interviews were concluded, and appropriate support was provided. This attention to detail reflects a commitment to rigorous and humane research (Archibald *et al.*, 2019).

In addition to these ethical safeguards, the study complied with institutional and governmental requirements for research with public officials. Formal approval was obtained from the relevant authorities before data collection began. Clarifications were sought through formal channels to ensure the study adhered to administrative protocols governing access to ministries, departments, and government agencies, as

well as local government authorities. This step was important not only for ethical validity but also for maintaining the integrity of the research process within the administrative context, where formal approval is a prerequisite for interactions with public officials.

By incorporating these ethical safeguards and obtaining formal approval, the study met the highest standards of integrity. This commitment not only protected the participants but also enhanced the reliability, credibility, and dependability of the results, ensuring that the knowledge gained contributes responsibly to research and public service practice.

3.7 Limitation of the Study

Although the study achieved great depth and institutional diversity, it is important to note that some actors within the intended sampling frame ultimately did not participate. Senior officials, including permanent secretaries, regional commissioners, and regional administrative secretaries, were contacted but declined to participate. Their non-response was largely due to their demanding schedules, limited availability, and institutional protocols governing the availability of senior civil servants. Similarly, strategic institutions such as the Tanzania Ports Authority, the Tanzania Revenue Authority, and the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority did not participate, citing time constraints and conflicting organizational commitments during the data collection period. Their absence is not due to methodological oversight but rather reflects the practical limitations of conducting research in the public sector where senior managers often hold demanding positions with tight deadlines.

While this exclusion reduces the study's ability to capture senior-level strategic perspectives, it does not compromise its analytical validity. The participating institutions and leaders work at the heart of policy implementation and organizational performance. Their daily roles place them close to the realities where leadership successes and failures are seen: motivating teams, adapting to policy change, managing talent and dealing with bureaucratic obstacles. The narratives they provided showed considerable internal consistency across institutions and regions, suggesting that the leadership challenges identified were systemic rather than isolated. By the time the study reached its forty-third participant, a broad range of themes had been achieved. Additional voices, particularly from underrepresented institutions, would have added diversity but would not have changed the overall pattern of findings.

To further strengthen the validity of the analysis, the study included interview data and civil service reform documents, audit reports, and policy guidelines. These sources independently highlight many of the same challenges described by participants, including lack of motivation, limited flexibility, skill mismatches, and structural barriers to effective leadership. The consistency between the experimental narratives and the documentary evidence suggests that the absence of key officials and institutions did not distort the main findings of the study. Rather, their lack

of participation should be interpreted as an institutional indicator of the limited openness of the public service to research a structural concern with implications for evidence-based policymaking in Tanzania.

Despite these limitations, the study maintains its methodological rigor and analytical strength. The sample size was sufficient to reflect the reality of leadership in the Tanzanian public sector, and the cross-sectional nature of the sources strengthened the credibility of the emerging themes. Thus, the findings provide a credible and well-founded contribution to understanding the leadership challenges that shape organizational performance in the Tanzanian public service.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The study employed a qualitative and exploratory approach using semi-structured interviews, with an interpretive orientation that prioritized understanding how public service leaders themselves experience and construct leadership challenges. This approach was chosen because leadership phenomena such as motivation, adaptability/resilience, and talent management are deeply rooted in organizational cultures, institutional histories, and individual experiences. Capturing this complexity required a method that allowed participants to freely express their perspectives, uncover underlying meanings, and describe situations in their own words.

Rather than assigning predefined categories or restricting responses to fixed statements, the study relied on the development of compelling themes. This allowed themes to emerge naturally from participants' narratives, ensuring that the analysis reflected realities on the ground rather than preconceived theoretical ideas. The intention was to provide depth, insight, and interpretive richness to understanding how leaders comprehend their environments, how they manage constraints, and how they understand the pressures and expectations that shape their work. This approach is consistent with the traditions of qualitative research, which consider the context, references, and complexity of human behaviour in institutional settings.

This chapter presents the findings of this process, based on data collected from forty-three public service leaders in ministries, regional administrations, local government authorities, and one state-owned enterprise. The analysis is structured according to the research objectives, and the themes emerge directly from the participants' reflections on the leadership challenges in the Tanzanian public service.

Before addressing key themes related to motivation, adaptability/resilience, and talent management, it is important to establish a demographic profile of the respondents. Understanding respondents' backgrounds in terms of age, gender, educational level and years of experience shades light for interpreting the findings. The experiences of these leaders are shaped not only by their positions but also by the social, generational, and professional contexts they serve. Presenting this profile clarifies the diversity within the sample and situates the emerging themes within the realities of leadership in the Tanzanian public service.

4.2 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

A total of 43 civil service leaders participated in this study, from ministries, local government authorities, and a government agency. Their demographic profile is described below and summarized in Table 4.1.

In terms of gender, the majority of respondents were male (30), while 13 were female leaders. Although the number of women in leadership positions is still low, their perspectives presented a significant diversity and highlighted the growing role of women in the public service leadership landscape in Tanzania. In terms of age, the majority of respondents (23 leaders) were in the 41-50 age groups, representing more than half of the sample. Thirteen respondents were between 30 and 40 years of age, while the remaining seven were 51 years of age or older. This distribution suggests that most participants were mid-career leaders, at a critical stage where responsibility, experience, and influence converge.

Respondents also had a high level of education. A total of 38 (88%) leaders had a master’s degree, while five (12%) had a bachelor’s degree. This reflects the increasing specialization of leadership in the Tanzanian public service, where postgraduate training is often a prerequisite for promotion to managerial and strategic positions.

In terms of work experience, the results revealed a group of leaders with extensive experience in public service management. Thirteen respondents had between 10 and 15 years of experience, while the largest group, 20 respondents, had between 16 and 20 years of service. Another 10 respondents reported having 21 or more years of service. This distribution reflects a strong combination of mid-level and long-serving leaders, merging innovative perspectives with institutional memories.

Overall, the demographic profile shows a large group of male, middle-aged leaders with a high level of education and extensive experience. These characteristics provide an important context for interpreting the results, as they demonstrate the strength and structural reality of leadership in the Tanzanian public service.

Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N=43)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	30	69.8
	Female	13	30.2
Age	30-40 years	13	30.2
	40-50 years	23	53.5
	50+ years	7	16.3
Education	Bachelor’s degree	5	11.6
	Master’s degree	38	88.4
Work Experience	10-15 years	13	30.2
	16-20 years	20	46.5
	21+ years	10	23.3

Source: Field Data (2025)

4.3 Motivation Challenges in Tanzania's Public Service

The first objective of this study was to examine the challenges associated with employee motivation in the Tanzanian public service and how these issues increasingly hinder efforts to improve organizational performance in public institutions. Findings from interviews with 43 leaders indicated that achieving effective employee motivation remains one of the most difficult and misunderstood aspects of leadership in government institutions, with significant implications for overall performance. Several related themes emerged from the data, highlighting individual and systemic barriers that not only hinder motivation but also impede improvements in organizational effectiveness.

One key finding was the misconception that motivation is identical with money. Leaders consistently reported that many employees equate motivation solely with financial incentives. This creates unrealistic expectations in a resource-constrained public sector, where salary increases and allowances cannot be the sole strategy for maintaining performance. Interviewees emphasized that true motivation stems from meaning, recognition, and the opportunity to contribute, but these non-financial incentives are often overlooked in practice.

As one participant responded:

"In the public sector, most of us believe that motivation is limited to allowances and salaries. That's a very negative view, since financial needs are endless. And, in reality, the government can't afford to overpay because of its revenue base. In my institution, this view manifests itself when people lose energy when allowances are delayed. You can feel the silence in the office; there's no creativity or enthusiasm, just waiting for the next pay check. As a leader, I tried to remind my team that motivation should come from the purpose of our work, not just money. But it's very difficult, because the system itself rewards later allowances more than performance. It's like trying to plant flowers in dry soil" (R6).

In this regard, the interviewees pointed out that salary differences across ministries and public institutions represent a major challenge. The differences in salary scales encourage employees to seek transfers to better-paying institutions rather than commit to their current positions. Leaders described this as a vicious cycle, where constant comparisons cloud organizational credibility and undermine morale. As one interviewee explained:

"Pay disparity is a serious problem. Public servants are constantly changing positions, seeking better-paying institutions, which creates instability. In one case, a woman who had been demoted for misconduct was transferred to a public institution. Amazingly, her new position offered her a higher salary than she had before the sanction. She even knelt down and thanked God! How is this possible?" (R5).

Another interviewee added:

“Some people in institutions receive higher salaries than the secretary generals. If this situation continues, it could discourage people from aspiring to those higher positions. The Fifth Government attempted to address this inequality; however, the approach taken focused on reducing the salaries of the highest earners rather than increasing those of the lowest, which may not have been a good or sustainable solution.” (R9).

Another important theme was the erosion of emotional attachment to work. According to participants, many public servants see their jobs as mere transactions, a means to earn a living, with no purpose beyond survival. Leaders expressed concern that this fragmentation reduces initiative, creativity, and resilience. Several participants suggested that employees are not inherently weak, but rather lack meaning in their work.

As one interviewee explained,

“Many public servants do not find meaning in what they do. They work only for the money, not to serve the community. Apart from the low salaries and benefits, there is no other reason to come to work. That is why motivation is very low” (R6).

The study also revealed a problem of financial illiteracy among employees. Many leaders found that, despite receiving regular salaries, some employees mismanage their salaries, go into debt, and thus feel as if they are working for nothing. This financial stress exacerbates frustration and undermines commitment. Leaders argued that without financial literacy programs, salary increases alone will not lead to greater motivation or productivity.

As one interviewee put it this way:

“The government has improved salaries, but many workers are losing their income. Loans are everywhere; some even leave their credit cards with lenders. Recently, when salaries increased, the entire amount had already been deducted for debt. Salary income is also a problem. In fact, many workers are in a very bad financial situation. If this is not addressed, the future will be even worse” (R11).

Another structural factor affecting motivation is job security in the public sector. While job security is highly valued, interviewees noted that it often fosters complacency. Employees in stable positions may not strive for excellence, knowing that dismissal is unlikely. Leaders suggested that establishing a culture of accountability and performance-based recognition could address this volatility without undermining stability.

As one participant responded:

“I think that open-ended employment makes people lazy. In the past, open-ended jobs made sense because there were few professionals. But nowadays, we have to pass contracts. If someone wants to revive, they have to show good performance. That would restore respect to work” (R13).

Finally, interviewees emphasized the role of leadership itself as a motivational factor. Some leaders were described as “mechanical,” distant, directive, and emotionally disconnected from their teams. Participants emphasized that leadership behaviour defines the behaviour of the organization: when leaders show empathy, vision, and insight, employees show more enthusiasm and commitment; when leaders remain cold and formal, motivation decreases. This underscores the lack of strategic leadership in some Tanzanian public service organizations.

As one interviewee added:

“Most leaders fail to motivate. They lead with threats. They find it difficult to listen. They become arrogant and act as if they know everything. This is a major problem in the public service. Leaders must be humble and work as a team with their staff. Arrogance and pride will get us nowhere” (R3).

Table 4.2 summarizes the findings on motivational challenges in the performance of the Tanzanian public service. The table highlights six key challenges that emanated from the interviews related to motivating staff to work professionally. These challenges hinder public service performance and require immediate intervention.

Table 4.2: Motivation Challenges in Tanzania’s Public Service

Theme	Description
Motivation equated with money	Employees perceive financial incentives as the sole motivator, ignoring meaning and recognition.
Salary disparities	Differences in pay across ministries fuel comparisons, transfers, and reduced loyalty.
Loss of emotional connection	Employees view work as purely transactional, lacking meaning or purpose.
Financial illiteracy	Mismanagement of salaries leads to debt and frustration, reducing commitment.
Permanent employment complacency	Job security fosters laziness and weakens urgency for performance.
Leadership as mechanical	Distant, emotionally detached leaders undermine employee morale and enthusiasm.

Source: Field Data (2025)

The themes presented above suggest that employee motivation in the Tanzanian public service is caught in a complex web of misconceptions, structural inequalities, and leadership deficiencies. At the heart of these findings is a surprising insight: while employees equate motivation with money, they fail to grasp its true meaning.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings align perfectly with Transformational Leadership Theory. Reducing motivation to financial gain reflects a lack of motivation, where leaders fail to communicate a compelling vision that connects employees' daily work to broader goals (Bass & Riggio, 2006). The lack of recognition and mentorship reflects a lack of personal focus, while the description of leaders as "technicians" reveals a lack of structured influence, where leaders fail to convey values that inspire trust. Similarly, reducing meetings to mere instructional sessions reflects a lack of intellectual stimulation, which could otherwise foster creativity and deep engagement. In essence, these findings suggest that Tanzanian public service has been largely managed through transactional approaches, with little evidence of transformational leadership.

The evidence also corroborates previous studies (cf. Mtawa, Ngowi, and Ibrahimu, 2025; Mboya & Mwakalila, 2024; and Njunwa, 2017). These studies identified pay inequality and a lack of recognition as recurring causes of low morale. Kyambade, Bartazary, Namatovu, and Tushabe (2024) further identified burnout and favoritism as barriers to engagement. However, this study adds a new dimension where the problem of financial illiteracy, for example, indicates that even when employees receive a salary, poor money management leads to frustration and a sense of worthlessness. These insights broaden the debate on motivation beyond organizational policies to encompass employees' personal lives, where financial stress undermines job performance.

The issue that job security fosters satisfaction is also relevant to international contexts. Some scholars (e.g. Wright and Pandey, 2010; Judge & Piccolo, 2004) point out that when employment is guaranteed, external pressure for performance is low. In turn, this gives greater importance to internal and visionary leadership. The case of Tanzania confirms this as meaningless security breeds apathy, not commitment.

Beyond the theoretical framework and empirical validation, the findings have important implications for emotional and organizational performance. They suggest that Tanzanian public servants are not inherently demotivated or apathetic, but rather experience a greater sense of disconnection from their work, which directly impacts key performance outcomes such as productivity, service quality, and commitment. What emerges is a greater desire for recognition, status, and a renewed sense of purpose, closely linked to higher levels of employee commitment, accountability, and effectiveness. When incentives are reduced to mere monetary compensation, the essence and spirit of public service ethics diminish, undermining intrinsic motivation and, in turn, undermining organizational performance in terms of efficiency, responsiveness, and sustainable public value creation. This makes leadership not

only a managerial function but also an ethical responsibility with direct implications for organisational performance. Leaders who inspire meaning, provide recognition, and demonstrate empathy can transform disengagement into enthusiasm, thereby improving employee engagement, collaboration, and service delivery outcomes. Conversely, leaders who remain technical, distant, and transactional tend to lead institutions with low morale and distrust conditions that reduce efficiency, effectiveness, and ultimately undermine overall organizational performance.

Internationally, this study places Tanzania within a broader debate on how public institutions can restore the human element to work within bureaucratic systems while simultaneously improving organizational performance. The results show that the answer lies not only in the budget, but also in the quality of leadership that generates motivation, commitment, and accountability in employees. With transformational leadership, even in resource-constrained environments, it is possible to inspire commitment, increase service quality, and drive organizational excellence; without such leadership, transformation cannot translate into improved performance or results.

4.4 Talent Management Challenges in the Tanzanian Public Service

The second objective of this study was to examine the challenges of talent management in the Tanzanian public service and its impact on organizational performance. Talent management, which encompasses the attraction, retention, and development of skilled employees, was consistently identified by interviewees as a critical but neglected area, with direct implications for organizational effectiveness, service delivery and long-term sustainability. The perspectives of 43 leaders revealed a number of systemic and cultural barriers that undermine the ability of public institutions to fully utilize the potential of their human resources, thereby hindering productivity, innovation, and overall organizational performance.

One of the most striking findings is that talent is often viewed as a threat rather than an asset. Interviewees recounted examples where employees who demonstrated exceptional skills were marginalized, denied opportunities, or even transferred because leaders feared being overshadowed. Instead of being nurtured, talented individuals were often restricted, which not only stifled innovation but also led to frustration and disengagement.

As one interviewee put it this way:

“In our public institutions, talent management remains one of the weakest areas. Too often, when individuals demonstrate exceptional ability, they are viewed with suspicion rather than appreciation. I have seen talented officials discouraged or even transferred simply because their abilities were seen as a threat. This culture discourages innovation, and, over time, the public service loses some of its brightest minds” (R12).

Another major theme was the lack of a structured system for talent identification and development. From recruitment onwards, the public service lacks effective systems for identifying, developing, and strategically deploying talent. Interviewees noted that new hires are often left “to find their own way,” without much mentoring or guidance. This lack of systematic development leads to wasted potential and early dissatisfaction among talented employees.

As one interviewee put it this way:

“Currently, there is no structured system for identifying and developing talent within the civil service. Mentoring is non-existent, and as a result, professional growth is largely dependent on individual effort. I often say that people are left to fend for themselves like chickens. Without deliberate guidance and nurturing, even capable officers remain ordinary.” (R5).

Interviewees also emphasized that institutional meetings and forums rarely serve as spaces for creativity or input. Instead, they function as top-down channels of instruction. Leaders dominate discussions, while employees remain passive listeners, with few opportunities to contribute ideas. This shift reduces the ability of organizations to utilize the creativity and expertise of their employees.

As one respondent stated that:

“There is no real platform to utilize the ideas of talented people. Meetings, for example, should be spaces for reflection and contribution. But meetings are just for the chair to give instructions. We spend the entire session listening to one person instead of sharing ideas.” (R2).

A recurring theme was psychological insecurity. Many interviewees reported that employees felt too far away from their leaders to offer ideas or voice concerns. This fear of speaking up created an environment where innovation was stifled, and mistakes were hidden rather than used as learning opportunities.

As one respondent put it:

“One of the biggest challenges we face as leaders is creating an environment where people feel safe to speak up. Often, officials are hesitant to share their ideas because they fear their opinions may be seen as a form of stubbornness. I have found that silence often feels safer than honesty, and this suffocates innovation and learning within our organizations.” (R6).

Another respondent stated that:

“One of the realities we continue to face is the distance that often exists between leaders and their teams. Sometimes, leadership becomes too small within the office and protocol, making us seem unreachable, while employees feel invisible or unheard. This emotional distance undermines trust and engagement. When people feel invisible, it is difficult for them to give their best.” (R7).

Another respondent noted that:

“In many of our organizations, communication still tends to flow in one direction where leaders talk, and employees listen. It has become part of our organizational culture. Over time, this discourages open dialogue and initiative, as people begin to feel that their voices are not valued. As leaders, we must recognize that when fear replaces trust, talent fades and creativity cannot flourish.” (R9).

Finally, the issue of favouritism and lack of qualifications was repeatedly highlighted. Interviewees said that appointments and promotions are often influenced by personal connections or political considerations rather than ability. This undermines morale, discourages performance, and results in leadership positions being filled by people who may lack the necessary skills to lead the institution effectively.

As one respondent put it:

“In this system, it doesn’t matter how hard you work or how qualified you are. What matters is whom you know. You can give your best every day, but someone with connections will ignore you. It breaks your spirit, because effort and talent no longer matter.” (R10).

Table 4.3: Talent Management Challenges in Tanzania’s Public Service

Theme	Description
Talent perceived as a threat	Skilled employees side-lined or transferred due to leaders’ insecurity.
Absence of structured frameworks	Lack of systematic processes for identifying, nurturing, and deploying talent.
Weak mentorship	New recruits left unsupported; little coaching or career guidance provided.
Meetings as directive forums	Spaces dominated by leaders; limited opportunities for creativity or contribution.
Lack of psychological safety	Employees fear speaking out; innovation suppressed, and mistakes concealed.
Favouritism and lack of meritocracy	Promotions and appointments influenced by connections rather than competence.

Source: Field Data (2025)

The findings above paint a bleak picture of talent management in the Tanzanian public service where talent is not developed, but suppressed, it is not celebrated, but blocked. These tendencies not only undermine employee morale, but also organizational effectiveness.

In theory, these findings align with Transformational Leadership Theory. Suppressing talented individuals indicates a failure of structured influence, where leaders should model openness and trust rather than uncertainty. The absence of mentorship indicates a lack of personal focus, a core element of transformational leadership that requires leaders to empower and develop their followers. Similarly, the fact that meetings are used for instruction rather than debate indicates a lack of intellectual stimulation, where employees should be encouraged to think critically, question ideas, and contribute new ones. In short, the failure of talent management is not only systemic, but also closely linked to leadership style.

These findings also confirm previous research. Deogratias and Tefurukwa (2024) found that public institutions in Tanzania struggle to retain talent due to deficient recognition and professional development systems. Payowela and Mrema (2023) documented upward mobility bias as a recurring problem that undermines morale and performance. Psychological insecurity echoes international research. Edmondson (1999) famously argued that innovation only thrives when employees feel secure enough to take personal risks. The Tanzanian case confirms that, without this security, institutions weaken.

At the same time, this study expands the literature by showing how leaders' fear of talented subordinates manifests in the Tanzanian context. While previous research has documented biases and weak systems, this study highlights leaders' personal insecurity as a clear obstacle to talent development. This perspective contributes to the understanding of how organizational culture interacts with the psychology of leadership to undermine institutional performance.

The emotional impact of these findings is powerful and closely linked to organizational performance. They reveal a public service where talent is often stifled rather than unleashed, reducing the institution's capacity and effectiveness. For young people entering public service with energy and ambition, the lack of mentorship and recognition leads to a slow erosion of motivation, reducing productivity and weakening future leadership structures. Favouritism and political interference create artificial barriers that hard work alone cannot overcome, eroding reputation and discouraging high performance. These conditions not only deplete individual talent but also deprive public institutions and nations of the innovation, efficiency, flexibility, and resilience that talented employees need to achieve sustainable organizational performance.

Globally, these findings raise an obvious question: what happens when the public service discourages talent instead of developing it? The result is poor organizational performance, declining service quality, and an erosion of public trust in government. On the other hand, leaders who follow transformational principles by identifying, mentoring, and empowering employees can transform talent into greater productivity, better services, and stronger institutions. For Tanzania, development requires

more than policy changes; it requires cultural shifts that improve organizational performance by valuing, supporting, and protecting talent as the foundation of an effective, high-performing public service.

4.5 Adaptability and Resilience Challenges in the Tanzanian Public Service

The third objective of this study was to examine the extent to which adaptability and resilience are embedded in Tanzanian public service leadership and how these capabilities impact organizational performance. Adaptability refers to the ability of leaders and institutions to respond effectively to new challenges, while resilience refers to the ability to recover from setbacks and maintain service delivery. Findings from 43 respondents indicated that although public institutions are making additional efforts to enhance adaptability, several persistent constraints continue to limit adaptability and resilience, undermining efficiency, operational continuity, and overall organizational performance.

A recurring theme was the frequent turnover of leadership, particularly at ministerial and senior management levels. Respondents explained that leaders are often replaced before they fully understand their institutions, let alone implement their strategic vision. This frequent turnover disrupts continuity, as public servants are forced into a perpetual cycle of change. Many participants complained that, as they get used to the style and guidelines of a leader, the new one comes with different priorities. This leads to restarting the process and as a result institutional energy is wasted.

As one interviewee explained:

“Frequent leadership changes are a major problem. For example, in one ministry, a new minister was warmly welcomed, introduced to all the institutions under their jurisdiction, and as soon as they settled in, we were informed that another minister had been appointed. This poses a major challenge to the development of the public service.” (R3)

Another significant issue was the disruption of strategic planning. Interviewees noted that new leaders often abandon existing strategic frameworks, such as Medium-Term Expenditure Frameworks (MTEFs) and institutional development plans, preferring instead to establish their own guidelines or pursue personal ambitions. This undermines long-term stability, creates confusion among staff, and undermines institutional performance by diverting attention from agreed objectives.

As one interviewee explained:

“Many new leaders come with verbal instructions. They do not follow the government’s strategic plans. Instead, when someone is appointed, they come with their own agenda. This is dangerous because strategic plans should guide our work, not personal preferences.” (R2.)

Another important issue that emerged was the skills gap, especially in relation to technological change and digital transformation. One interviewee put it this way:

“Digital tools and systems have the potential to significantly improve efficiency and service delivery, but a large number of staff still lack the training and experience needed to use them effectively. Efforts are ongoing to develop these skills, but the pace of technological change often outpaces our training programmes, making it difficult for staff to keep up and preventing institutions from fully embracing new technologies.” (R13).

This suggests that public service leaders are struggling to keep staff skills up to speed with rapidly changing technologies. This reflects a broad literature showing that a lack of digital literacy and ICT skills can hinder change in public sector institutions, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (Mergel *et al.*, 2018). Resistance to change, often rooted in organizational culture, emerged as another key barrier. Participants emphasized that the introduction of new procedures or systems is often met with scepticism and hesitation.

One official noted:

“Employees are often hesitant or diffident to adopt new ways of working. Many believe that traditional methods have worked well enough, so they see these changes as irrelevant or risky. Changing these attitudes is more difficult than implementing new systems, and requires consistent communication, consistent demonstrations of benefits, and time to build buy-in and trust.” (R7)

This view is consistent with established research that emphasizes cultural context as a major barrier to change and adaptation, requiring deliberate change management strategies (Kotter, 1995; Fernandez & Rainey, 2006).

Resource constraints were frequently identified as a factor limiting an institution’s ability to invest in resilience and innovation. Officials reported that tight budgets, staff shortages, and inadequate facilities often force institutions to prioritize immediate operational needs over long-term capacity building.

One participant emphasized:

“We have ambitious plans to improve services and implement innovative initiatives, but our efforts are often hampered by inadequate budgets, staff shortages, and inadequate facilities. Even the most ambitious ideas are not always implemented, as resources must be prioritized for urgent and immediate needs, leaving little room for long-term investments in resilience and capacity building.” (R10)

These findings are consistent with the broader literature on public sector challenges in developing countries, which documents the tension between short-term operational pressures and long-term institutional development (García-Quevedo *et al.*, 2017).

Bureaucratic rigidity further compounds these challenges. Interviewees emphasized that institutional processes and approval structures are often too slow to respond effectively to emerging issues. As one official explained,

“The institutional processes and approval structures are often too slow to respond effectively to emerging challenges. Multiple layers of authorization are intended to ensure accountability, but they frequently delay urgent actions. Adaptability and rapid response are critical in times of change or crisis, yet our bureaucratic structures are not designed to facilitate speed, which hampers adaptive capacity.”
(R6)

This observation reflects a widely recognized tension in public service that is, while accountability mechanisms are essential, overly rigid bureaucracies can constrain timely decision-making and undermine organizational adaptability (Muhdiarta, 2025).

Moreover, frequent political interference was highlighted as a destabilizing factor for institutional resilience. Shifts in political priorities compel public service institutions to constantly adjust plans and strategies, disrupting ongoing projects and affecting staff morale.

One respondent noted,

“Frequent shifts in political priorities force institutions to constantly adjust their plans and strategies. Projects that were previously deemed essential can suddenly lose support, and staff morale can suffer as a result. Sustaining progress in such an environment requires constant vigilance, adaptability, and the ability to quickly realign objectives with evolving directives.” (R3).

These findings are consistent with a broader body of literature on public sector challenges in developing country contexts, which documents the tension between short-term operational pressures and long-term institutional development (García-Quevedo *et al.*, 2017). Bureaucratic complexity further exacerbates these challenges. Interviewees emphasized that institutional processes and approval structures are often too slow to respond effectively to emerging problems.

As one official explained:

“Institutional processes and approval structures are often too slow to respond effectively to emerging challenges. Multiple levels of approval are intended to ensure accountability, but they often delay rapid action. Adaptability and rapid response are essential in times of change or crisis, but our bureaucratic structures are not designed to facilitate speed, which hinders our ability to adapt to change.”
(R6)

Table 4.4: Adaptability and Resilience Challenges in Tanzania’s Public Service

Theme	Description
Frequent leadership changes	Leaders are often replaced before understanding institutions; disrupts continuity.
Abandonment of strategic planning	New leaders impose personal directives, ignoring existing frameworks like MTEFs.
Constant adjustment by employees	Staffs remain in perpetual reorientation cycles, reducing efficiency.
Weak resilience mechanisms	Existing policies/regulations insufficient to counterbalance leadership instability.
Skill Gaps (Tech & Digital Transformation)	Difficulty keeping staff skills aligned with rapidly evolving technologies.
Resistance to Change (Organizational Culture)	Cultural resistance slows adoption of innovations and reforms.
Resource Constraints (Budget, Staffing, Tools)	Limited financial, human, and material resources restrict implementation capacity.
Bureaucratic Rigidity (Hierarchies & Procedures)	Rigid structures and slow decision-making hinder adaptive responses.
Political Interference (Shifting Priorities)	Frequent policy shifts disrupt planning and institutional continuity.

Source: Field Data (2025)

The findings described above emphasize that the Tanzanian public service is facing a major crisis of institutional continuity and adaptability. Frequent turnover of key personnel, coupled with the abandonment of strategic plans, has left many institutions trapped in a state of perpetual adjustment. A combination of skills gaps, resistance to change, limited resources, bureaucratic complexity, and political interference further undermine the system’s ability to adapt and maintain resilience. As a result, public institutions spend more energy adapting to new mandates than advancing long-term development goals, leaving leaders and staff exhausted and uncertain.

In theory, these findings again highlight the lack of transformational leadership in the public service. The imposition of personal mandates over institutional strategies suggests a lack of motivation, where leaders should unite employees around a shared vision rather than dividing approaches through shifting agendas. The failure to maintain strategic direction and invest in long-term capabilities also reflects a gap in planned influence, as transformational leaders are expected to demonstrate stability, integrity, and purpose. Furthermore, effective resilience requires leaders who demonstrate personal focus, guiding, mentoring, and supporting their teams through

periods of change. Instead, respondents described a culture of casual leadership in which employees navigate change without guidance, transparency, or emotional support.

These findings reinforce previous studies by Muchunguzi (2023), Ndossy (2025), Ridder *et al.*, (2015), and Constantine, Mwinjuma, and Nemes (2025), which also found that bureaucratic complexity and discontinuous leadership undermine reform implementation in the Tanzanian public sector. However, this study delves deeper into the debate by highlighting the emotional and psychological costs of institutional instability. Leaders described employees as being trapped in an endless cycle of new directions, where each leadership transition resets priorities and disrupts progress. The cumulative effect is a profound erosion of trust, motivation, and institutional memory that no amount of policy reform can fix.

The emotional impact of these outcomes has direct implications for organizational performance. As public institutions adjust to new leaders or changing policy directions, employees lose faith in long-term goals. Strategic plans become symbolic rather than actionable, innovation sags in times of uncertainty, and the “we always start over” mentality takes root in organizational culture. This chronic instability erodes morale and destroys the sense of shared purpose that underlies well-functioning public institutions. In key sectors such as health and education, this disruption leads to slow transformation, inconsistent service delivery, and diminished public trust all of which undermine the overall effectiveness of the organization. Globally, these findings highlight a fundamental truth, that is, no institution can thrive without continuity, competence, and emotional stability in leadership. Leadership change is common, but transformational leaders ensure that change strengthens institutions rather than disrupts them. They unite their teams around clear goals, invest in developing skills to cope with change, and create a culture where learning, not fear, drives performance.

For Tanzania, the work ahead has clear implications for organizational performance. First, the country must reduce unnecessary turnover among key personnel and protect strategic plans from political interference to ensure continuity and effective implementation. Second, it must develop leaders who combine stability with adaptability, leaders who invest in developing skills, foster learning, and build resilience through trust and emotional intelligence, rather than control. Only when leadership acts as a guardian of continuity and a catalyst for learning will adaptability and resilience move from a fragile aspiration into a practical reality, strengthening institutional capacity, improving service delivery, and overall organizational performance in Tanzania’s public administration.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This final chapter culminates the intellectual and practical research. While the previous chapter presented and analyzed the findings on motivation, talent management, adaptability, and resilience, this chapter articulates that knowledge into a coherent and meaningful account. It summarizes the key findings, outlines the conclusions that can be drawn from them, and presents recommendations for strengthening leadership performance in the Tanzanian public administration. Finally, it identifies areas for future research, acknowledging that the leadership challenges facing Tanzania are significant and require sustained academic engagement.

In this way, this chapter serves as both a reflection and a call to action. A reflection on what has been discovered about the state of leadership in the Tanzanian public service and a call to leaders, policymakers, and researchers to translate this knowledge into strategies that build stronger, more motivated, and more talented institutions.

5.2 Summary of Findings

This study examined the leadership challenges facing Tanzania's public service, focusing on three key areas: employee motivation, talent management, and adaptability and resilience. Perspectives were collected from 43 leaders in ministries, local government authorities, and one government agency. Their perceptions provided valuable insights into the day-to-day realities of leadership in the Tanzanian public sector and highlight how these challenges directly impact organizational performance, service delivery, and institutional effectiveness.

The study found that motivation in Tanzania's public administration is poorly understood and is often closely linked to financial incentives. Employees tend to equate motivation with salary increases and benefits an unsustainable approach in a resource-constrained environment. Beyond financial expectations, leaders highlighted additional challenges, including salary disparities across ministries, weak emotional ties to work, and poor financial literacy, all of which contribute to personal debt and frustration. Permanent employment was also seen as promoting satisfaction, while leadership styles described as "technical" were increasingly seen as demoralizing. Overall, these findings suggest that public servants are not inherently weak, but rather experience a lack of acceptance, recognition, and supportive leadership that directly impacts organizational performance, reducing productivity, commitment, and the overall effectiveness of public institutions.

The study also found that talent is often poorly managed in Tanzania's public administration, where skilled employees are often viewed as threats rather than assets

to be developed. Respondents indicated a lack of structured systems for identifying and developing talent, limited mentoring for new employees, and an organizational culture where meetings are used primarily to issue directives rather than foster innovation. Psychological safety was severely lacking, making employees reluctant to share ideas or question the ideas of their superiors. Furthermore, favouritism and promotions without merit were common, undermining morale and leading to the appointment of unqualified individuals to leadership positions. Together, these factors undermine institutional capacity, reduce innovation, and reduce overall organizational performance.

The third set of findings highlighted a weak state of adaptability and resilience within Tanzania's public service. Frequent leadership changes at ministerial and management levels disrupted continuity, leaving staff trapped in cycles of constant change. Strategic frameworks, such as Medium-Term Expenditure Frameworks (MTEFs), were often sidelined as new leaders pursued personal agendas, undermining stability and long-term planning. While formal guidelines and regulations exist to promote resilience, they have been found insufficient to address the impacts of frequent leadership changes. This resilience undermines organizational learning, reduces operational efficiency, and reduces trust in public institutions, all of which directly impact overall organizational performance.

In summary, the findings suggest that the challenges facing Tanzania's public service are not simply technical or financial, but are fundamentally human and leadership-driven. Employee motivation suffers from a lack of purpose and recognition, talent is stifled by fear, bias, and weak development systems, and resilience is undermined by frequent leadership changes and inefficiencies. Taken together, these issues undermine organizational performance, reducing productivity, innovation, and public trust. The findings highlight the urgent need for transformational leadership that can restore purpose, nurture talent, and provide stability, enabling public institutions to operate effectively and deliver sustainable results.

5.3 Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the effectiveness of Tanzania's public service is determined less by the number of reforms or policies and more by the quality of leadership guiding its institutions. In the three areas examined, motivation, talent management, and resilience-based change, the findings point to a clear conclusion, that is, leadership is fundamental to the public service, and when it fails, the entire system suffers, harming organizational performance and service delivery.

First, motivation in the public service is not simply about financial incentives. While salaries and benefits are important, they alone do not foster commitment, loyalty, or high performance. Employees seek recognition, fairness, and a sense of purpose in their work. Leadership that fails to motivate beyond financial rewards leaves institutions lacking enthusiasm, commitment, and effectiveness.

Second, talent is misappropriated and often wasted. Instead of developing skilled employees, institutions often suppress them through job insecurity, favouritism, and a lack of mentorship. These practices drain the public service's most valuable human resource and reduce innovation, productivity, and organizational performance. Leadership that fears talent instead of empowering it fosters inefficiency where excellence is urgently needed.

Third, adaptability and resilience remain weak. Frequent leadership changes and a neglect of strategic continuity trap institutions in cycles of adjustment and stagnation. Without leaders who safeguard the long-term vision and guide teams through uncertainty, resilience becomes theoretical rather than operational, undermining institutional learning, effectiveness, and trust.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the Tanzanian public service is not primarily hampered by a lack of resources or policies, but rather by a lack of transformational leadership that inspires meaning, fosters talent, and ensures continuity amidst change. The way forward lies not in gradual reforms, but in reorienting leadership towards human values, transforming the public service from a function to a mission of national importance and, therefore, strengthening organizational performance throughout the sector.

5.4 Recommendations

The findings reported in this study make it clear that the Tanzanian public service needs a cultural shift in how leadership is understood and practiced. First, there is an urgent need to redefine incentives beyond money. While financial incentives are undeniable, they are insufficient to maintain engagement in a resource-constrained environment. Leaders must strive to foster non-financial sources of motivation, such as recognition, fairness, and a sense of purpose. Linking daily tasks to national visionary priorities like Dira 2050 can help restore purpose, while structured recognition programs and professional development opportunities can foster a sense of belonging and pride. Furthermore, integrating financial literacy programs into leadership and employee development plans would help public servants manage their salaries more effectively, reducing the frustration caused by personal debt.

Second, talent management must be institutionalized. The Tanzanian public service needs a strong system to identify, develop, and strategically deploy talent. This includes formal mentoring programs to guide new employees, clear succession planning processes, and effective safeguards to ensure merit-based hiring and promotions. Favouritism and political interference should be discouraged, as they undermine morale and place unqualified individuals in leadership positions. Talent should be viewed as an asset to be cultivated, not a threat to be suppressed.

Third, adaptability and resilience must be embedded in leadership practices. Leaders should be given sufficient time in their roles to implement strategies before being

reassigned, and incoming leaders should align with existing strategic frameworks, such as Medium-Term Spending Frameworks, rather than discarding them based on personal directives. Training in change management, conflict resolution, and technological adaptation is essential, but so is institutional support for psychological resilience. Leaders must be equipped not only to withstand pressure but also to inspire calm and confidence in their teams during times of crisis.

Finally, it is important to reframe leadership development as a lifelong commitment, rather than a one-off training program. Institutions such as Uongozi Institute and the Tanzania Public Service College (TPSC) already offer leadership development platforms, and in today's digital world, learning resources are plenty to facilitate learning. What is lacking is not access to training, but a culture of self-directed learning. During data collection, it was observed that almost no leader had a book on their desk, a clear sign of a lack of intellectual investment. Leaders must take ownership of their own growth, incorporating reading, research, and reflection into their daily practice. Leadership cannot thrive in a culture where leaders stop learning. To be able to build a high-performing public service, leaders must lead by example as learners. Equally important is a cultural shift on how the public service approaches research. In this research, barriers to access and low uptake indicated that research is still undervalued in government positions.

However, research is not an intervention, but a public good, a key tool for accountability and institutional learning that enhances evidence-based decision making. Therefore, governments must protect and promote research as a fundamental public service activity. This involves ensuring the timely participation of researchers, appointing officials in ministries and local authorities to facilitate access to research, and creating systems that guarantee research findings are translated into policy and practice. A public service that resists research deprives itself of the evidence it needs to improve its decision making process. Therefore, protecting researchers and integrating research into governance is not optional, it is essential for building institutions that learn, adapt, and better serve citizens.

Table 5.1: Summary of Key Findings and Corresponding Recommendations

Category	Findings	Recommendations
Motivation Challenges	Motivation is widely misunderstood, often reduced to financial incentives; employees equate motivation with salary increases and allowances.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redefine motivation beyond money: cultivate non-financial sources such as recognition, fairness, and meaning in work; link daily responsibilities to national priorities (e.g., Vision 2025); implement structured recognition programs and career development opportunities.
	Salary disparities across ministries, erosion of emotional connection to work, and poor financial literacy, which fuels personal debt and frustration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate financial literacy programs into leadership and employee development initiatives to help public servants manage salaries effectively and reduce frustration.
	Permanent employment leads to complacency; “mechanical” leadership styles weaken morale.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote leadership that inspires purpose and engagement; emphasize transformational leadership practices that nurture motivation and meaning in work.
Talent Management Challenges	Skilled employees are perceived as threats rather than assets; absence of structured frameworks for identifying and developing talent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutionalize talent management: create coherent frameworks to identify, nurture, and deploy talent strategically; implement formal mentorship programs and succession planning.
	Weak mentorship for new recruits; meetings used for directives rather than creativity; psychological safety largely absent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish mentorship programs; foster an environment that encourages idea-sharing and psychological safety; reform meeting culture to support creativity and collaboration.
	Favouritism and non-meritocratic promotions undermine morale and place incompetent individuals in leadership roles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforce merit-based recruitment and promotion; actively discourage favouritism and political interference; cultivate a culture where talent is valued and developed.
Resilience & Adaptability Challenges	Frequent leadership changes disrupt continuity; staffs face perpetual cycles of reorientation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide leaders with sufficient tenure to implement strategies; incoming leaders should align with existing strategic frameworks rather than discarding them.

Category	Findings	Recommendations
	Strategic frameworks (e.g., MTEFs) often abandoned; formal guidelines insufficient to counter instability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed adaptability and resilience into leadership practices; provide training in change management, crisis response, and technological adaptation; ensure institutional support for psychological resilience.
	Weakened organizational learning, reduced efficiency, and diminished trust in government institutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and promote research as a core public service activity; designate officers to facilitate research access; create mechanisms to translate research findings into policy and practice.
	Lack of lifelong leadership development; leaders not investing in continuous learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reframe leadership development as a lifelong responsibility; encourage self-directed learning, research, reading, and reflection; leverage institutions like Uongozi Institute and TPSC for continuous learning.

Source: Field Data (2025)

5.5 Areas for Future Research

This study has provided valuable insights into the challenges of public service leadership in Tanzania, but it has also revealed areas where more research is urgently needed. The first concern is the psychological dimensions of motivation. While this study demonstrated how meaning, cognition, and financial awareness influence employee motivation, future research should examine the psychological and cultural principles that shape the relationship between public servants and their work. Such studies could integrate behavioural science and cultural systems to identify why meaning is so intangible in bureaucratic environments.

Second, more research is needed on the institutional impact of staff turnover. This study has shown that frequent turnover at the top level of management disrupts continuity and resilience, but more systematic research is needed to examine how such instability affects organizational culture, the sustainability of change, and citizen outcomes over time.

Third, there is a great need for research on the role of research in governance. This study found that public institutions often fail to consider research as a valuable resource. Future research should explore why research is undervalued in the Tanzanian public sector, how barriers to access can be removed, and how evidence from research findings can be systematically integrated into decision-making processes.

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INTERVIEW GUIDE

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Current Role and Responsibilities

Briefly describe your current role and main responsibilities within your organization.

2. Length of Service in the Public Sector

How long have you worked in the public sector?

Male

Female

4. Age Group

35–45 45–55 55–60 60+

5. Highest Level of Education

Bachelor’s Degree

Master’s Degree

Doctorate

PhD

Other (specify): _____

6. Current Position/Title

Permanent Secretary

Director

Department Head

Regional Administrative Secretary

Manager

Other (specify): _____

7. Type of Government Institution

Ministry

Regional Administration

Executive Agency

Public Organization

Other (specify): _____

8. Years of Leadership Experience in the Public Sector

Please indicate the number of years you have held leadership or management positions in the Public Sector Sector:

Years _____

OBJECTIVE 1: MOTIVATION CHALLENGES

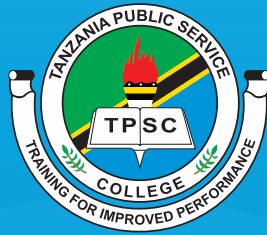
9. In your experience, what factors affect employee motivation in your organization?
10. What specific challenges do you face when trying to motivate your team or employees?
11. How do limited resources or bureaucratic structures affect employee motivation?
12. What strategies have you found effective (or ineffective) in increasing employee motivation?
13. How do policies or leadership styles contribute to or hinder employee motivation?

OBJECTIVE 2: TALENT MANAGEMENT

14. How would you describe your organization's approach to talent management (selection, development, and retention)?
15. What are the most common challenges you face in talent management within your department?
16. Are there any barriers to identifying and nurturing high-potential employees?
17. How does your organization address succession planning or leadership development?
18. In your opinion, what can improve talent management practices in the public service?

OBJECTIVE 3: ADAPTABILITY AND RESILIENCE

19. Can you describe a recent example of significant change within your organization or sector? How did you respond?
20. What challenges do you face in adapting to policy changes, political shifts, or technological changes?
21. What qualities or support systems help you and your colleagues maintain resilience in times of uncertainty?
22. How prepared is your leadership team to lead in times of rapid or disruptive change?
23. What types of training or development will strengthen leaders' adaptability and resilience?



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