Differences in Leadership Styles and Effectiveness between Women and Men in the Tanzanian Public Sector

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Abstract

   This study examines differences in leadership styles and effectiveness between women and men in the Tanzanian public sector. Drawing from transformational and transactional leadership theories, this study specifically addresses three questions. The data were gathered using a questionnaire from 302 gender stakeholders who were sampled through hybrid sampling technique. Collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics and independent t-tests. The findings reveal that, women are more likely to apply transformational while men apply transactional leadership styles. Women and men leaders adopt different leadership styles due to socialization, cultural expectations, organizational dynamics and personality traits. Women leadership styles are more effective in certain roles and sectors than men, and the vice-versa is true. This study concludes that, men and women use different leadership styles and they exhibit effectiveness in such different styles. The public and private partnership should continuously promote gender-sensitive leadership.

Keywords: *Leadership Styles, Differences, Effectiveness, Public Sector*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

   Leadership continues to shape the effectiveness of public organisations worldwide, influencing how employees work and how citizens experience government services (Kyambade *et al.,* 2024). It remains one of the most defining elements of effective governance and organizational success, particularly in the public sector where social accountability and service delivery are central to national development. In Tanzania, leadership within government institutions has increasingly attracted scholarly and policy attention due to its direct link to institutional performance, transparency, and citizen trust (Ng'ang'a & Mrope, 2023). The style in which leaders exercise authority whether transformational, transactional, participative, or autocratic shapes not only employee motivation but also the quality of policy implementation and innovation in public service delivery (Masele & Lwoga, 2022). As the public sector becomes more diverse and inclusive, gender has emerged as a significant factor influencing leadership approaches, communication patterns, and decision-making tendencies.

   One of the defining features of leadership landscape in Tanzanian public sector is gender (women and men). Studies have shown that women leaders often adopt more collaborative and participatory styles, while men are more likely to rely on directive or transactional approaches (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2020; Kyaruzi & Nsubuga, 2024). Regardless of this, women are still underrepresented in senior public-sector roles, including ministerial and local government positions, particularly in Zanzibar (Kalumanga *et al.*, 2023; UONGOZI Institute, 2023). The challenge extends to specific sectors: in education, women lead only a minority of rural schools, while in health and defense services, cultural norms and promotion systems continue to restrict their upward mobility (Khamis, 2023; Mujuni & Babeiya, 2024; Wilbard, 2025). Despite these hurdles, research suggests that women who do rise to leadership often bring inclusive and

transformational approaches that strengthen team cohesion and service delivery (John, 2025; Wilbard, 2025).

Globally, some patterns of gender and leadership landscape in public sector are observed. In developed regions such as Europe, North America, Asia, and Australia, women have made significant progress, but they still hold fewer top leadership positions than men (Buss, 2024; WGEA, 2024). Studies from Europe and the United States suggest that differences in leadership effectiveness between men and women are generally small, but women often balance both communal and assertive styles, which can be highly effective depending on the organisational culture (Buss, 2024). Governments in countries such as Australia have responded with stronger gender targets and leadership pipelines, recognising that diverse leadership teams lead to more resilient governance (Reuters, 2024; WGEA, 2024). Yet, in Asia-Pacific contexts, women leaders continue to face harassment and cultural hostility, showing that numbers alone do not equal true equality (UN Women, 2024).

The Sub-Saharan African context reveals a parallel story. Quotas and gender-mainstreaming policies have opened doors for women, but cultural expectations and weaker professional networks often limit their progression (Kalumanga *et al.,* 2023; Mujuni & Babeiya, 2024). Nevertheless, studies point out that when women do lead, they often adopt collaborative and transformational approaches that can enhance employee motivation and organisational performance, even if such contributions are not always fully recognised (John, 2025; Wilbard, 2025).

In Tanzania, leadership studies increasingly show that approaches like authenticity and transformational leadership can inspire employees and improve organisational performance, yet little is known about whether men and women actually practise these styles differently in the public sector (Kyambade *et al.*, 2024; Madale & Mwakalila, 2024). While existing research has highlighted women's underrepresentation in senior posts and explained how cultural norms, biased promotion systems, and weak mentorship structures restrict their advancement, the question of whether women and men who reach leadership positions lead in distinct ways remains largely unanswered (Kalumanga *et al.*, 2023; Khamis, 2023; Mujuni & Babeiya, 2024). Evidence from different sectors such as education, health, defence, and local government consistently links transformational and relational leadership to stronger employee outcomes, but it is still unclear whether these benefits operate similarly for both women and men leaders (John, 2025; Wilbard, 2025).

At the global level, reviews show that gender differences in leadership effectiveness are often small, context-specific, and influenced by how leadership is evaluated, suggesting the need for Tanzanian-based studies that disentangle genuine behavioural differences from social or institutional bias (Buss, 2024; Paustian-Underdahl *et al.*, 2024). Although policies and public debates in Tanzania increasingly call for more women in leadership roles, evidence to guide targeted reforms such as training, mentoring, or promotion strategies remains limited because the mechanisms linking gender, leadership style, and effectiveness have not been adequately explored (UONGOZI Institute, 2023; Wilbard, 2025).

Despite growing gender diversity in Tanzania's public sector, there is still limited understanding of whether and how men and women differ in their leadership styles, and whether these differences shape their effectiveness. Without this evidence, policymakers and practitioners face challenges in developing informed interventions that could strengthen public-sector performance while also promoting fair and inclusive leadership opportunities (Kalumanga *et al.*, 2023; Kyambade *et al.*, 2024; Buss, 2024).

Therefore, this study examines differences in leadership styles and effectiveness between women and men in the Tanzanian public sector. It specifically addresses three questions: *What is the difference in leadership styles between women and men leaders in the public sector? What make women and men leaders adopt different leadership styles in the public sector? What is the difference in effectiveness between women and men leaders in the public sector?*

Doing this study is significant because it explores how women and men in Tanzania's public sector may lead differently and how these differences affect their effectiveness. Despite growing gender diversity in leadership roles, there remains limited understanding of how these variations in leadership style influence organisational outcomes. By examining these dynamics, the study aims to shed light on how leadership behaviours can enhance motivation, productivity, and overall performance within public institutions. The findings are expected to offer practical

insights for policymakers and public-sector managers, helping them design leadership development programmes, mentoring initiatives, and promotion strategies that foster equitable opportunities for both women and men. It will also provide guidance on identifying leadership practices that strengthen employee engagement, teamwork, and service delivery.

Furthermore, this study contributes to understanding the Tanzanian context by highlighting how cultural norms, institutional structures, and organisational practices shape leadership behaviours. By distinguishing between differences that are rooted in individual style and those influenced by systemic factors, the study can provide more nuanced recommendations for improving leadership effectiveness. Finally, the study seeks to support a more inclusive and fair public sector where leadership success depends on skills, approaches, and outcomes rather than gender. By doing so, it can help maximise the potential of all leaders and promote a more responsive, efficient, and effective public service.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by Transformational and Transactional Leadership Theories, which together provide a comprehensive perspective for understanding leadership behaviours and effectiveness in public-sector settings. There are several leadership styles however, these theories ground such styles on transformational and transactional styles as per the context of this study.

Although there are several types of leadership styles, this study considers only transformational and transactional styles due to some reasons: theoretical foundations, meaning that both styles basically make the continuum of leadership behaviour of Full Range Leadership Model (FRLM) by Bass and Avolio (1994). Empirical justification, in which most of recent studies on gender, leadership styles and effectiveness concentrated only on transformational and transactional styles. Another reason is practical relevance of both styles to Tanzanian public sector. This means that, the features of transformational and transactional styles match with dimensions (organizational performance, accountability, motivation, and innovation) used to evaluate effectiveness leaders in public sector.

2.1.1 Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational leadership, introduced by James MacGregor Burns (1978) and expanded by Bass Bernard (1985). This leadership style is characterised by four key components: Idealised Influence, in which leaders act as role models, earning the trust and respect of followers. Inspirational Motivation, in which leaders articulate a clear and appealing vision, inspiring enthusiasm and commitment. Intellectual Stimulation, in which leaders encourage creativity and innovation by challenging existing assumptions and promoting problem-solving. Individualised Consideration, in which leaders provide personalised support and mentorship to foster followers' development.

Transformational leadership style focuses on how leaders can inspire and motivate their teams to achieve higher levels of performance while fostering personal growth (Bass, 1985; Al-Rjoub et al., 2024). Leaders who embrace this style act as role models, gaining trust and respect by demonstrating high ethical and performance standards (Yu et al., 2024). They clearly communicate a compelling vision that motivates followers and builds enthusiasm for shared goals (Al-Rjoub et al., 2024). Transformational leaders also stimulate creativity and innovation by challenging assumptions and encouraging problem-solving (Yu et al., 2024). In addition, they provide individualized guidance and mentorship, supporting the professional and personal development of their team members (Bass, 1985; Al-Rjoub et al., 2024). Recent studies indicate that transformational leadership strengthens organizational resilience and promotes innovation, particularly in contexts that demand adaptability and collaboration (Yu et al., 2024).

Figure 1: Transformational Leadership Theory
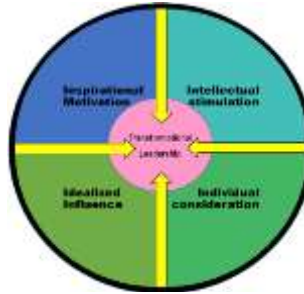
Source: Burns (1978) and Bass (1985)

2.1.2 Transactional Leadership Theory

The Transactional Leadership Theory was first formally conceptualized and described by James MacGregor Burns (1978), who contrasted it with transformational leadership, and then Bernard Bass (1985) expanded it, operationalizing it and identifying its key elements such as contingent reward and management-by-exception. Later studies (e.g. Avolio & Bass, 2004; Northouse, 2022) have further clarified its characteristics and applications.

Transactional leadership is a structured and practical approach that focuses on achieving clear, short-term goals by setting expectations, offering rewards, and taking corrective actions when necessary (Garger *et al.*, 2023). It consists of three main elements: contingent reward, active management by exception, and passive management by exception. In contingent reward, leaders define clear objectives and provide tangible incentives such as recognition, promotions, or other benefits to those who meet or exceed expectations, creating a direct link between effort and outcome (Garger *et al.*, 2023).

Active management by exception involves leaders closely monitoring performance, identifying deviations from standards, and intervening promptly to correct issues, ensuring consistent results (Garger *et al.*, 2023). In contrast, passive management by exception is more reactive, with leaders stepping in only after problems arise or when performance falls below expectations, which may limit early problem-solving but still maintains accountability (Garger *et al.*, 2023). Together, these components make transactional leadership a methodical, rule-based style that prioritizes efficiency, compliance, and stability, making it particularly suitable for structured and routine organizational settings, although it may provide less room for creativity or innovation in dynamic environments (Garger *et al.*, 2023).

Transactional leadership is centered on structured exchanges between leaders and followers, where adherence to expectations is ensured through rewards and corrective measures (Bass, 1985; Klein, 2023). Leaders clearly define responsibilities, making sure team members understand their tasks and performance standards (Klein, 2023). Contingent rewards are offered to encourage compliance, while management-by-exception strategies are used to monitor and correct deviations (Bass, 1985). While this approach works well in stable and well-defined environments, it may limit creativity and long-term engagement (Klein, 2023). Nevertheless, in public-sector contexts where clarity, accountability, and adherence to procedures are essential, transactional leadership helps maintain consistent performance and operational stability (Al-Rjoub *et al.*, 2024).

Figure 2: Transactional Leadership Theory

Source: Burns (1978) and Bass (1985)

2.1.3   Synthesis of the Theories

By considering both transformational and transactional leadership styles, this study aims to examine how gender may influence leadership approaches and their effectiveness in the Tanzanian public sector. Combining these perspectives allows for a deeper understanding of whether women and men leaders tend to adopt different leadership styles and how these approaches impact organizational outcomes. It also highlights the organizational and personal factors that shape leadership behaviour, including culture, institutional constraints, and individual values. This integrated theoretical framework provides a solid foundation for the study, guiding the formulation of research questions and hypotheses, and offering insights into improving leadership effectiveness in public institutions.

2.2   Empirical Framework

2.2.2   Differences in Leadership Styles Between Women and Men in the Public Sector

Studies across global, regional, and national contexts consistently indicate that women and men tend to demonstrate different leadership styles in the public sector, although these differences are shaped by context rather than biological predisposition. Research in developed countries suggests that women are more likely to adopt transformational and participatory leadership, characterized by empathy, collaboration, and empowerment, whereas men more frequently apply transactional and directive approaches, emphasizing structure, control, and performance targets (Eagly & Carli, 2021; Northouse, 2021). For example, Hoobler *et al.* (2022) found that women in U.S. public institutions fostered higher employee engagement through inclusive decision-making, while men emphasized hierarchical authority structures.

Similar patterns have been observed in Sub-Saharan Africa. Amponsah-Tawiah *et al.* (2022) noted that women leaders in Ghana favored relational and collaborative leadership strategies that promoted participation and trust, whereas male leaders tended to maintain hierarchical command. Wachira and Were (2023) found comparable dynamics in Kenyan public institutions, linking women's transformational leadership to improved team cohesion and morale.

In Tanzania, studies reflect these broader trends. Jovin and Tarimo (2023) reported that women in local government commonly practiced participatory leadership styles that promoted dialogue and cooperation, while male leaders tended to rely on assertive, task-oriented approaches. Similarly, Khamis (2023) found that women in the health sector emphasized empathy and teamwork, in contrast to male leaders' emphasis on authority and decisiveness. These differences indicate that Tanzanian women and men exhibit distinct leadership orientations shaped by organizational culture and social expectations yet both styles serve valuable functions depending on context.

2.2.3   Why Women and Men Adopt Different Leadership Styles in the Public Sector

The leadership styles adopted by women and men in public service institutions are influenced by a combination of socialization processes, cultural norms, institutional constraints, mentorship access, and organizational expectations.

2.2.3.1   Social and Cultural Norms

Gender-role socialization continues to shape leadership identities. Societal expectations encourage men to be decisive, assertive, and independent, while women are socialized to be collaborative, relational, and nurturing (Eagly & Carli, 2021; Northouse, 2021). In African contexts, these expectations persist strongly. Nkomo and Ngambi (2021) describe how women leaders often navigate a "double bind," balancing authority with warmth to gain legitimacy in male-dominated institutions.

2.2.3.2   Institutional and Organizational Structures

Public sector structures often reflect hierarchical, male-centered traditions. Saville *et al.* (2024) found that women in health systems across Kenya and India adopted consensus-building leadership styles as adaptive strategies to operate within patriarchal organizational cultures. Likewise, Amponsah-Tawiah *et al.* (2022) noted that rigid bureaucratic norms in Ghana reinforced male-dominated leadership models, compelling women to rely more on relational influence to assert leadership.

2.2.3.3   Mentorship and Professional Networks

Limited access to mentorship and sponsorship reduces opportunities for leadership development among women. ESSA (2021) and UNGEI (2022) emphasized that women who receive structured mentoring are more likely to develop confidence and adaptive leadership competencies. In Tanzania, Mtui and Muguba (2024) observed that mentorship and peer support play a critical role in enabling women leaders to balance assertiveness and relational leadership, particularly in competitive, male-dominated environments.

2.2.3.4   Perceptions of Legitimacy and Evaluation Bias

Because leadership is often equated with traditionally masculine traits such as authority and decisiveness, women leaders frequently adopt relational or collaborative approaches to avoid negative stereotype judgments. Kalumanga *et al.* (2023) showed that in Zanzibar, cultural expectations around gender roles continue to influence which leadership behaviors are seen as legitimate or appropriate for women. Generally, the evidence suggests that gendered leadership styles are not personal preferences alone they are shaped by deeply embedded cultural norms, institutional architectures, and available support systems.

2.2.4 Differences in Leadership Effectiveness Between Women and Men

Research increasingly shows that neither women nor men are inherently more effective as leaders; rather, effectiveness depends on the alignment between leadership style, organizational culture, and performance expectations. In developed contexts, women's transformational leadership styles are often associated with stronger employee engagement, innovation, and workplace trust (Chaudhry & Javed, 2021; Hoobler *et al.,* 2022). Meanwhile, men's transactional and directive styles tend to support efficiency and clarity in decision-making, particularly in environments with rigid performance structures (Kreutzer *et al.*, 2023).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, Wachira and Were (2023) found that when organizations adopt gender-inclusive policies, women's participatory leadership contributes significantly to improved employee satisfaction and service delivery outcomes. Saville *et al.* (2024) emphasized that where supportive institutional frameworks are absent, the effectiveness of women's leadership styles may be undervalued or overlooked.

In Tanzania, evidence suggests similar conditional outcomes. Jovin and Tarimo (2023) reported that women's participatory leadership approaches improved team morale and accountability in local government settings. However, Mujuni and Babeiya (2024) found that women leaders in defense institutions faced resistance in asserting authority, affecting perceptions of their effectiveness despite competence. Khamis (2023) highlighted that women's collaborative leadership in the health sector enhanced service performance, but recognition often lagged due to gendered expectations.

Therefore, leadership effectiveness in Tanzania's public sector is shaped not by gender alone, but by organizational culture, role legitimacy, and structural support for diverse leadership styles.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study was guided by a positivist research philosophy, which assumes that reality exists independently and can be objectively measured through observation and quantifiable data (Saunders *et al.*, 2022). Positivism relies on systematic measurement and structured instruments to identify patterns and relationships. In the context of this study, focusing on differences in leadership styles and effectiveness between men and women in the Tanzanian public sector, a positivist approach was appropriate because it allowed for objective assessment, clear comparisons, and generalizable conclusions.

In line with the positivist philosophy, the study adopted a deductive research approach, which involves testing theoretical assumptions against empirical data (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Saunders *et al.*, 2022). The research drew on transformational and transactional leadership theories to frame expectations about leadership styles and their effectiveness among male and female leaders. This approach enabled the study to verify whether actual leadership behaviours aligned with theoretical predictions.

Additionally, the study employed a quantitative research approach, focusing on numerical data to identify patterns, measure differences, and test relationships (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). By collecting structured data and applying statistical methods such as descriptive analysis and independent t-tests, the research was able to generate evidence-based insights into leadership practices, making the findings robust and reliable.

The study used a combination of descriptive and explanatory research designs. The descriptive design provided a clear picture of leadership styles and effectiveness among men and women in the Tanzanian public sector (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). It allowed the researchers to summarize perceptions and behaviours, highlighting patterns across different regions and organizational levels. The explanatory design complemented this by examining relationships between variables, particularly how gender influences leadership styles and effectiveness (Saunders *et al.*, 2022). Together, these designs enabled the study not only to present the current state of leadership but also to explore differences and identify significant patterns, making the results both informative and actionable.

Data were collected from five major cities in Tanzania: Arusha, Dar es Salaam, Dodoma, Mbeya, and Mwanza. These areas were selected to capture a variety of administrative, socio-economic, and cultural contexts within the public sector, providing a well-rounded view of leadership practices across the country. The cities likewise represent major zones of Tanzania: Arusha-Northern zone, Dar es Salaam-Eastern zone, Dodoma-Central zone, Mbeya-Southern, and Mwanza-West zone. The zones represents and qualifies the study being done in Tanzania.

The target population included gender stakeholders in the public sector. These stakeholders include managers, supervisors, and employees who interact directly with leadership structures. Because the total population was unknown during the time of the study, Cochran's formula (1977) for unknown populations was used to determine an ideal sample size, which suggested approximately 384 respondents for a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. Considering practical constraints, the study successfully included 302 respondents, which was considered sufficient for meaningful analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2023) i.e. 79% of response rate.

A hybrid sampling strategy combining purposive, stratified, and convenience sampling was employed in this study. Purposive sampling targeted participants (gender stakeholders) with direct leadership experience in the public sector to ensure the relevance of responses. Stratified sampling ensured that gender, organizational levels, and cities were proportionally represented in this study. Convenience sampling was used to include respondents who were readily accessible, particularly in locations where logistical access posed challenges. This approach ensured a practical, representative, and reliable sample.

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire designed to measure both transformational and transactional leadership behaviours, as well as leadership effectiveness. The questionnaire used Likert-scale items to capture respondents' perceptions of leadership practices, team cohesion, employee motivation, and overall performance outcomes (effectiveness). Prior to the main study, the instrument was pilot-tested to ensure clarity, reliability, and suitability for the Tanzanian public-sector context.

The independent variable is leadership styles, divided into transformational and transactional categories, measured using established scales (Bass, 1985; Garger *et al.*, 2023). Transformational leadership included dimensions such as inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, idealized influence, and individualized consideration; while transactional leadership included contingent reward, active management by exception, and passive management by exception.

On the other hand, the dependent variable is leadership effectiveness. The measurement of leadership effectiveness was measured based on respondents' perceptions of outcomes influenced by leadership practices: Employee motivation–level of engagement, enthusiasm, and commitment to organizational goals. Team cohesion–quality of collaboration, communication, and conflict resolution within teams. Performance outcomes–achievement of organizational objectives, efficiency, and quality of service delivery. Each variable was measured on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with higher scores indicating stronger agreement. Scores from these indicators were combined into an overall leadership effectiveness index, which was then analyzed using independent t-tests to compare differences between male and female leaders.

The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with $\alpha \geq 0.7$ considered acceptable for internal consistency (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Content validity was ensured by adapting items from previously validated leadership scales and consulting experts in public administration. A pilot study with 30 respondents helped refine ambiguous items and confirmed the instrument's suitability for the study context.

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) and inferential statistics, specifically independent t-tests. Descriptive statistics were suitable for this study because they help summarise and present data on leadership styles and effectiveness between men and women in a clear and meaningful way. They allow the researcher to identify patterns, trends, and differences in leadership behaviours, communication, and decision-making within Tanzania's public sector without making causal assumptions (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019). Using means, frequencies, and percentages provides a straightforward overview of gendered leadership dynamics, offering a solid foundation for interpretation and policy insights (Sekaran & Bougie, 2020). The independent t-tests was used to determine whether significant differences existed between men and women in terms of leadership styles and effectiveness. All analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS version 28, ensuring precision and reliability of the results.

The study strictly adhered to ethical guidelines. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed that they could withdraw at any time without penalty. The study protocol was approved by relevant institutional authorities, ensuring compliance with established ethical standards in social science research.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study explored differences in leadership styles and effectiveness between women and men in the Tanzanian public sector, drawing on transformational and transactional leadership theories. The research addressed three key questions: *How do leadership styles differ between women and men? What factors influence the adoption of these styles? How does leadership effectiveness vary between genders?*

4.1 Background Information of the Surveyed Respondents
4.1.1 Gender of Respondents

The study included both men and women, providing a balanced perspective on leadership in the Tanzanian public sector. Out of the 302 respondents, 140 were female (46.4%) and 162 were male (53.6%). Coding gender numerically (Female = 1, Male = 2) produced a mean score of 1.54 with a standard deviation of 0.50, reflecting a fairly even gender representation and allowing for meaningful analysis of differences in leadership styles between men and women.

Table 1: Gender of Respondents (N=302)

Gender	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Female	140	46.4%	1.54	0.50
Male	162	53.6%		

4.1.2 Regional Distribution

Respondents were selected from five major cities to capture the diverse organizational and cultural settings of Tanzania. Specifically, 62 respondents (20.5%) came from Arusha, 75(24.8%) from Dar es Salaam, 58(19.2%) from Dodoma, 52(17.2%) from Mbeya, and 55(18.2%) from Mwanza. When coded numerically (Arusha=1, Dar es Salaam=2, Dodoma=3, Mbeya=4, Mwanza=5), the mean score was 2.91 with a standard deviation of 1.22, indicating a relatively even regional distribution, with a slight concentration in Dar es Salaam due to its status as an administrative and economic hub.

Table 2: Regional Distribution of Respondents (N=302)

Region	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Arusha	62	20.5%	2.91	1.22
Dar es Salaam	75	24.8%		
Dodoma	58	19.2%		
Mbeya	52	17.2%		
Mwanza	55	18.2%		

4.1.3 Work Experience

The respondents reported varying levels of professional experience, which helps capture perspectives from both early-career and seasoned professionals. A total of 68 respondents (22.5%) had 0–5 years of experience, 94(31.1%) had 6–10 years, 78(25.8%) had 11–15 years, and 62(20.5%) had more than 16 years. The average work experience was 10.8 years with a standard deviation of 7.2, indicating a sample with a strong mix of experience levels suitable for providing informed insights on leadership practices.

Table 3: Work Experience of Respondents (N=302)

Work Experience (Years)	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
0–5	68	22.5%	10.8	7.2
6–10	94	31.1%		
11–15	78	25.8%		
16+	62	20.5%		

4.1.3 Sector of Employment

A majority of respondents 178(58.9%) worked in the public sector, while 124(41.1%) were employed in the private sector. When coded numerically (Public=1, Private=2), the mean score was 1.41 with a standard deviation of 0.49, reflecting that while most respondents were from the public sector, consistent with the study's focus a significant number from the private sector provided additional perspective on leadership practices across different organizational settings.

Table 4: Sector of Employment (N=302)

Sector	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Public	178	58.9%	1.41	0.49
Private	124	41.1%		

4.1.4 Education Level

Respondents were generally well-educated, which could influence their understanding and application of leadership practices. Specifically, 32 respondents (10.6%) had completed secondary education, 172 (56.9%) held an undergraduate degree, and 98 (32.5%) had postgraduate qualifications. The mean educational level, coded as Secondary = 1, Undergraduate

= 2, Postgraduate = 3, was 2.22 with a standard deviation of 0.60, indicating a highly educated sample with sufficient knowledge to engage with modern leadership concepts.

Table 5: Education Level of Respondents (N=302)

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Secondary Education	32	10.6%	2.22	0.60
Undergraduate	172	56.9%		
Postgraduate	98	32.5%		

4.1.5 Age of Respondents

Age distribution provides insight into career stage and experience. 52(17.2%) respondents were aged 20–29 years, 112(37.1%) were 30–39 years, 88(29.1%) were 40–49 years, and 50(16.6%) were 50 years or older. The mean age was 36.4 years with a standard deviation of 9.8, indicating a sample dominated by mid-career professionals capable of balancing experience with fresh perspectives in leadership.

Table 6: Age of Respondents (N=302)

Age Group (Years)	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
20–29	52	17.2%	36.4	9.8
30–39	112	37.1%		
40–49	88	29.1%		
50+	50	16.6%		

4.1.6 Management and Administrative Position

Respondents represented a range of organizational levels, from no management responsibilities to corporate leadership roles. Specifically, 48(15.9%) respondents had no management role, 102 (33.8%) held functional roles, 86(28.5%) occupied middle-management positions, and 66(21.8%) were in corporate leadership roles. When coded numerically (None =1, Functional=2, Middle=3, Corporate=4), the mean management position score was 2.55 with a standard deviation of 0.98, indicating that the majority were in functional or middle-management roles while still including perspectives from higher-level leadership.

Table 7: Management and Administrative Positions (N=302)

Position	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
None	48	15.9%	2.55	0.98
Functional	102	33.8%		
Middle	86	28.5%		
Corporate	66	21.8%		

4.2 Leadership Styles' Difference between Women and Men

Descriptive statistics revealed clear patterns in leadership styles among male and female leaders (Table 8). Accordingly, the results reveal that female leaders preferred transformational leadership style, with 140(92.1%) of respondents agreeing, something confirmed as well by a mean score of 4.21 (SD=0.53). Contrariwise, male leaders favoured transactional leadership style, with 120 (79.4%) of respondents agreeing, and with a mean score of 4.02(SD=0.58). These results generally imply that, women practise transformational leadership style while men practice transactional leadership style in the Tanzanian public sector.

Table 8: Descriptive Statistics for Leadership Styles (N=302)

Leadership Style	Gender	Frequency	%	Mean	Std. Deviation
Transformational	Female	140	92.1	4.21	0.53
	Male	82	54.3	3.48	0.67
Transactional	Female	60	39.5	3.12	0.61
	Male	120	79.4	4.02	0.58

The results indicate that female leaders tend to favour transformational leadership, which emphasizes inspiration, mentoring, and stimulating intellectual engagement. In contrast, male leaders are more inclined toward transactional leadership, focusing on performance management, rewards, and structured oversight. Mean scores confirm these patterns, with women scoring higher on transformational leadership and men scoring higher on transactional leadership.

4.3 Factors which Influence the Adoption of Leadership Styles
4.3.1 Socialization

The results show that socialization is the strongest factor shaping leadership styles, with 210(69.5%) of respondents admitting its influence and a mean score of 4.05(SD=0.62). This highlights the role of early life experiences such as family upbringing, schooling, and community interactions in forming leadership behaviours. Women, for instance, are often socialized to value collaboration and empathy, which fosters transformational leadership, while men may be encouraged to focus on authority and task completion, aligning more with transactional leadership styles.

4.3.2 Cultural Expectations

Cultural norms and expectations also significantly impact leadership styles, as 198(65.6%) of participants agreed, with a mean score of 3.91(SD=0.65). Societal perceptions about gender roles influence how leaders enact their authority. In the Tanzanian public sector, these expectations may lead women to adopt more relational and participatory approaches, whereas men are often expected to assert control and enforce rules, shaping the prevalence of transactional practices among male leaders.

4.3.3 Organizational Dynamics

Organizational dynamics were reported by 184(60.9%) of respondents, with a mean of 3.78(SD=0.68), indicating that the work environment, management practices, and institutional policies play a key role in leadership style adoption. Public-sector organizations that emphasize structured performance metrics and hierarchical decision-making may encourage transactional leadership, whereas those that value teamwork, creativity, and employee engagement tend to foster transformational leadership behaviours.

4.3.4 Personality Traits

Finally, personality traits were identified by 172(56.9%) of respondents (M=3.65, SD=0.70) as an important influence. Individual characteristics such as openness, conscientiousness, and emotional intelligence shape how leaders interact with others and respond to organizational challenges. Leaders who are empathetic and innovative may naturally adopt transformational practices, while those who are highly task-oriented and structured may gravitate toward transactional methods.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Factors Influencing Leadership Style (N=302)

Factor	Frequency (Agree)	% Agree	Mean	Std. Deviation
Socialization	210	69.5	4.05	0.62
Cultural Expectations	198	65.6	3.91	0.65
Organizational Dynamics	184	60.9	3.78	0.68
Personality Traits	172	56.9	3.65	0.70

4.4 How does Leadership Effectiveness Varies between Genders

Descriptive statistics for leadership effectiveness are presented in Table 3. The overall effectiveness reveals that, 140(92.1%) respondents agreed that women are more effective than men with mean 4.18(SD=0.56). Oppositely, the overall effectiveness reveals that 162(88.3%) respondents agreed that men are less effective than women with mean 3.89(SD=0.62).

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Leadership Effectiveness (N=302)

Effectiveness Indicator	Gender	Frequency	%	Mean	Std. Deviation
Overall Effectiveness	Female	140	92.1	4.18	0.56
	Male	162	88.3	3.89	0.62

Women scored slightly higher in overall effectiveness than men, suggesting that transformational leadership can be particularly effective in motivating teams and fostering cohesion. Conversely, men's transactional leadership was more effective in structured, task-focused roles, highlighting that leadership effectiveness depends on the context in which it is applied.

4.5 Statistical Comparison

Independent samples t-tests were conducted to examine whether differences in leadership styles and effectiveness were statistically significant (Table 4). It compared the effectiveness scores for leadership styles of women and men in the public sector. From Table 4, there is significant difference in scores for female leaders (M=4.18, SD=0.56) and male leaders (M=3.89, SD=0.62) with t=3.46, df=300, p=0.001. These results imply that, there is significant differences in both leadership styles and overall effectiveness between women and men in the Tanzanian public sector.

Table 4: Independent Samples t-Test for Leadership Styles and Effectiveness

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	p-value
Transformational Leadership	Female	140	4.21	0.53	8.23	300	<0.001
	Male	162	3.48	0.67			
Transactional Leadership	Female	140	3.12	0.61	-9.12	300	<0.001
	Male	162	4.02	0.58			
Overall Effectiveness	Female	140	4.18	0.56	3.46	300	0.001
	Male	162	3.89	0.62			

The t-test results show significant differences in both leadership styles and overall effectiveness between women and men (p < 0.01). Female leaders were significantly stronger in transformational behaviours, while male leaders scored higher in transactional behaviours. Overall, women demonstrated slightly higher effectiveness, particularly in roles requiring collaboration and team engagement.

4.6 Discussion of the Findings

These findings support the predictions of transformational and transactional leadership theories. Women's tendency toward transformational leadership aligns with behaviours that promote motivation, mentoring, and team cohesion. Men's preference for transactional leadership reflects structured, goal-oriented approaches that are effective in task-focused contexts.

Generally, survey responses highlighted that leadership styles are shaped by socialization, cultural norms, organizational structures, and personality traits. Women often adopt transformational styles because societal expectations encourage collaboration, empathy, and relationship-building. Men's preference for transactional leadership aligns with environments that reward task completion and performance monitoring. Personality traits such as openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness also play a role in shaping how leaders approach their

roles. These findings are consistent with international studies showing that gendered social expectations influence leadership behaviour in both developed and developing contexts (Eagly & Carli, 2021; Adeyemi & Olowookere, 2022).

Internationally, similar patterns have been observed. In Europe and the United States, women leaders are often more transformational, promoting engagement and innovation, whereas men are more transactional, focusing on task completion and performance monitoring (Eagly et al., 2022; Li & Zhao, 2023). Sub-Saharan studies also show that cultural norms and organizational expectations reinforce these gendered leadership patterns (Adeyemi & Olowookere, 2022; Ncube & Moyo, 2021).

In general, the findings of this study underlines that leadership effectiveness is context-dependent, with transformational approaches excelling in collaborative and people-focused sectors, and transactional approaches performing best in structured, results-driven environments. Recognizing these differences can help public-sector organizations design tailored leadership development programs to enhance both performance and inclusivity.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The study highlights clear differences in leadership styles and effectiveness between men and women in the Tanzanian public sector. Women were found to predominantly practice transformational leadership, focusing on inspiring and motivating their teams, mentoring subordinates, and encouraging creative problem-solving. In contrast, men tended to lean toward transactional leadership, placing greater emphasis on performance monitoring, structured rewards, and rule enforcement. Statistical analysis confirmed that these differences are significant, emphasizing that gender is an important factor in shaping leadership approaches.

Several factors were identified as influencing how leaders adopt their styles. Socialization emerged as the most influential, suggesting that early life experiences, education, and community influences shape leadership tendencies. Cultural expectations also play a strong role, as societal norms continue to influence perceptions of how men and women should lead. Moreover, organizational dynamics, including workplace structures, management practices, and performance evaluation systems, affect the leadership approaches adopted, while personality traits such as openness, conscientiousness, and empathy further guide how leaders engage with their teams. Together, these factors show that leadership style is shaped by a combination of social, cultural, organizational, and individual characteristics.

In terms of effectiveness, the study found that leadership outcomes are context-dependent. Female leaders, who adopt transformational behaviours, were particularly effective in roles that require collaboration, employee motivation, and team cohesion. Male leaders, favoring transactional approaches, performed best in structured, task-oriented contexts where clear rules and measurable outputs are critical. This indicates that leadership success is not solely determined by gender, but by how well a leader's style aligns with the demands of the role and organizational environment.

These findings have important practical and theoretical implications. Public-sector organizations can use this knowledge to design leadership development programs that build on the natural strengths of male and female leaders, fostering transformational qualities in all leaders while ensuring transactional approaches are applied effectively where needed. Understanding these gendered tendencies can also guide recruitment, placement, and promotion decisions, helping to align leaders with roles that best suit their leadership style. The influence of socialization, culture, and organizational factors further suggests the need to create inclusive and adaptable work environments that allow diverse leadership approaches to flourish.

The study also contributes to theory by extending transformational and transactional leadership frameworks within the Tanzanian public sector. It demonstrates how leadership behaviours are shaped by a dynamic interplay of gender, social norms, organizational conditions, and personality traits. Finally, the findings highlight opportunities for further research, including exploring sector-specific differences, monitoring leadership evolution over time, and designing interventions to cultivate adaptable leadership practices across genders. Overall, the study emphasizes that understanding and leveraging differences in leadership style can enhance team performance, employee engagement, and organizational outcomes in the public sector.

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