

Revisiting Nyerere: Ethical Leadership as a Pillar for Sustainable Development in Tanzania

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Abstract

This paper examines the incorporation of ethical leadership within the socialism framework established by Julius Kambarage Nyerere, the founding father of Tanzania, to advance sustainable development in the nation. The study employed a descriptive design utilizing quantitative research methodology. A sample of 484 individuals from various groups, including government, civil society, academia, and corporate sectors in Tanzania, was selected via purposive sampling. Ninety-four (94) completed Google Form questionnaires, which were collected via a link and returned as an Excel sheet. Quantitative data were evaluated using IBM SPSS Statistics version 22 and given as frequencies and percentages. The findings indicated that integrity is a particularly challenging aspect for contemporary leaders to maintain. It is shown that ethical leadership is crucial for attaining sustainable development. It further posited that leaders do not value ethical leadership in decision-making. The study found that corruption, insufficient accountability, and political involvement are the three foremost impediments to ethical leadership. Strategies identified for integrating Nyerere's ethical principles into contemporary leadership in Tanzania include integrity and anti-corruption practices, the promotion of self-reliance and sustainable development, the advancement of national unity and inclusivity, and the incorporation of Nyerere's ethical philosophy into curricula. The study concludes by contributing to the discourse on ethical leadership, providing ideas that may drive Tanzania towards a more sustainable and equitable future. The report advises leaders to prioritize integrity in everyday management and strengthen ethical leadership standards to attain sustainable development.

Keywords: Ethics, Leadership, Ethical leadership, Development, Sustainable development

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Ethical leadership is essential for sustainable development and is a significant topic in modern governance and development initiatives. Julius Kambarage Nyerere, the founding father of Tanzania, established a comprehensive Ujamaa ideology (African socialism), which highlights moral integrity, human dignity, collective welfare, responsibility, and social equality as foundational elements for national advancement (Nyerere, 1968), provides essential ideas for addressing the current socio-economic and political challenges that hinder sustainable development in Tanzania. Re-examining Nyerere's ethical leadership offers valuable insights for tackling these issues. His vision emphasized collective well-being, inclusion, and ethical governance—principles relevant in contemporary initiatives aimed at fostering long-term growth, alleviating poverty, and ensuring environmental sustainability. The paper examines Nyerere's moral leadership as a paradigm for promoting sustainable development in Tanzania, critically evaluating its relevance in governance, policy formulation, and societal advancement.

Ethical leadership, grounded in principles like integrity, responsibility, and accountability, has been thoroughly examined regarding its influence on sustainable development. Northouse (2018) underscores the significance of ethical leadership in cultivating organizational cultures that foster ethical decision-making and social responsibility. Nyerere's moral values, rooted in Ujamaa, aimed to foster communal responsibility and equality in Tanzania, influencing the nation's developmental path (Legum, 1999). Nyerere's Ujamaa worldview and leadership approach are crucial in advancing ethical government in Tanzania. His advocacy for equality, social justice, and national self-reliance aligns with contemporary notions of sustainable development, which aim to harmonize economic progress with social equity and environmental conservation (Shivji, 2009). Kimambo (2019) asserts that Nyerere's leadership profoundly shaped the moral underpinnings of Tanzanian society, impacting policy decisions and governance strategies focused on alleviating poverty, facilitating educational access, and fostering social cohesion.

Ethical leadership is essential for attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as the United Nations (UN) acknowledged. Research demonstrates that leaders who uphold ethical norms are more inclined to enact policies that foster sustainable, fair development (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). The ethical leadership paradigm advocated by Nyerere has significantly impacted Tanzania's development policies, particularly in education, agriculture, and

health (Ngonyani, 2016). Contemporary administration in Tanzania, however, encounters obstacles in completely actualizing Nyerere's ethical principles. Mwansasu and Pratt (2012) contend that although Nyerere's vision established the groundwork for national unity and equitable development, contemporary leadership falters in maintaining these ideals amidst corruption, political instability, and economic disparity. The disparity between Nyerere's ethical leadership and the current governance framework generates apprehensions over the viability of Tanzania's developmental initiatives. Goleman (2017) emphasizes that the convergence of ethical leadership and sustainable development indicates that leaders who value ethical behaviours are more inclined to implement sustainable governance, ensuring that development advantages all societal sectors. Tanzania increasingly acknowledges the need to re-evaluate Nyerere's leadership paradigm to tackle the ongoing issues of poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation (Kassile, 2020).

In short, Nyerere's ethical leadership establishes a robust basis for advancing sustainable development in Tanzania. Despite notable advancements in education and healthcare, the current leadership needs to realign with Nyerere's vision of ethical governance to address modern issues. For instance, Nyerere famously lived a modest life, even after retirement, symbolizing his commitment to integrity and selflessness. He once stated, "Leaders must not make themselves masters of the people; they must be servants of the people" (Nyerere, 1973). Based on those assertions, this study aims to enhance the discourse by examining the implementation of Nyerere's ethical leadership principles in tackling Tanzania's contemporary sustainable development challenges.

Tanzania faces governance challenges such as corruption and weak accountability, despite Julius Nyerere's legacy of ethical leadership. While his principles remain relevant, their application in modern leadership remains limited. This study examines how Nyerere's ethical leadership philosophy can address current governance issues and strengthen sustainable development in Tanzania. The main objective of the study is to examine the relevance of Nyerere's ethical leadership philosophy in addressing contemporary governance challenges and promoting sustainable development in Tanzania.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive research design utilizing a quantitative data collection method.

2.2 Study Area

The study was conducted in Dodoma and Dar es Salaam at the Mwalimu Nyerere Memorial Academy (MNMA), the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM), the Institute of Finance Management (IFM), Research on Poverty Alleviation (REPOA), the University of Dodoma (UDOM), the Institute of Rural Development Planning (IRDP), the President's Office - Public Services Management and Good Governance (PO-PSMGG), and the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). These two regions and institutions were selected because they offer symbolic, administrative, and historical significance, while the institutions clearly understand leadership dynamics in Tanzania.

2.3 Population and Sampling

The study's target group comprised employees from government, civil society, academia, and the corporate sector, including policymakers, scholars, and NGO members engaged in governance and development.

2.4 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques:

A purposive sampling method was employed to identify individuals with an in-depth knowledge of ethical leadership principles and their significance in development. A sample size of 485 respondents was selected from the institutions as mentioned above.

2.5 Data Collection Methods

An online structured questionnaire was distributed to a sample of 484 individuals via WhatsApp groups sampled across several institutions. The questionnaire comprised open-ended and closed-ended questions designed to evaluate: understanding of Nyerere's ethical leadership principles; perceptions regarding the role of moral leadership in fostering sustainable development; opinion on the current status of ethical leadership in Tanzania; and suggestions for incorporating Nyerere's ethical framework into modern leadership practices.

2.6 Data Analysis

Ninety-four (94) completed Google Form questionnaires, which were collected via a link and returned as an Excel sheet. The quantitative data in the excel sheet were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 22, where descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were calculated.

3. Findings/ Results

3.1 Distribution of Respondents by Demographic and Social Characteristics

The distribution of respondents by demographic and socioeconomic variables is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Demographic and Social Characteristics

Characteristics		Frequency (N=94)	Percentage (%)
Age	18 - 30	5	5.3
	31 - 45	58	61.7
	46 - 60	30	31.9
	61 and above	1	1.1
Gender	Male	29	30.9
	Female	65	69.1
Highest level of education	Secondary	1	1
	Bachelor's Degree	17	18.1
	Master's Degree	45	47.9
	PhD	31	33.0
Occupation	Government Officials	36	38.3
	Private Sector Employee	5	5.3
	Academic/ Researcher	49	52.1
	Civil Society Organization	1	1.1
	Other (Please specify)	3	3.2
Years of experience in the occupation	Less than 5 years	8	8.5
	5 - 10 years	33	35.1
	11 - 20 years	39	41.5
	More than 20 years	14	14.9

Source: Field Data, 2024.

Table 1 reveals that the highest age group was 31–45. 58 (61.7%), followed by 30 (31.9%) who were 46-60. The least frequent age categories were 18–30 and 61+, with 5.3% and 1.1% rates, respectively. Female frequencies were 65(69.1%) and male frequencies 29(30.9%). Respondents' educational levels: PhD 31 (33%), Master's 47 (47.9%), Bachelor's 17 (18.1%), and secondary education 1 (1%). These findings agree with Kamari (2016), who found more master's-degreed academics in higher education institutions. Academic/researchers made up 49 (52.1%), government officials 36 (38.3%), corporate sector 5 (5.3%), civil society group 1 (1.1%), and others 3 (3.2%). There are 39 (41%), 33 (35.1%), 14 (14.9%), and 8 (8.5%) years of occupation experience.

3.2 Principles of JK Nyerere’s ethical framework

Respondents were requested to identify the JK Nyerere ethical framework principles and the most difficult principle for leaders to uphold today. Figure 1 indicates that 58 respondents (58%) identified integrity, social justice, and self-reliance each accounted for 11 (11.7%), equality for 8 (8.5%), and unity for 6 (6.4%). However, integrity was identified as the most challenging principle in J.K. Nyerere's ethical framework for contemporary leaders to uphold.

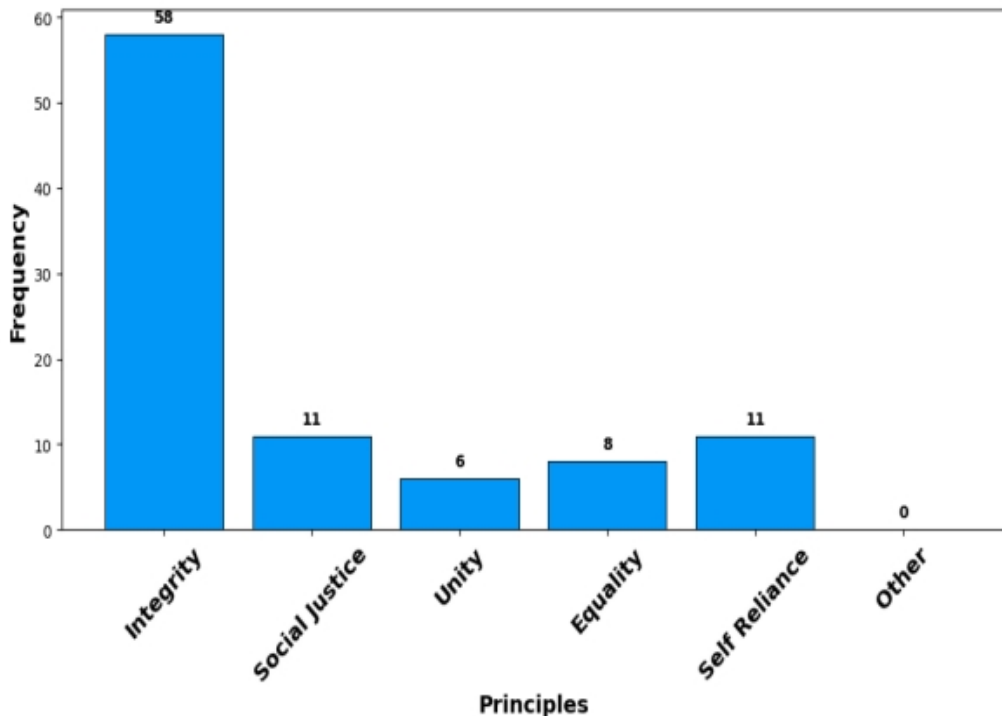


Figure 1: Nyerere’s ethical frameworks are most challenging for leaders to uphold today

Source: Field Data, 2024.

3.3 Extent of the importance of ethical leadership in attaining Sustainable Development (SD)

The respondents were asked to rate ethical leadership in attaining sustainable development in Tanzania. Figure 2 indicates that 57(60.6%) concurred that ethical leadership is essential for sustainable development in Tanzania. In comparison, 31(33%) deemed it imperative, 5 (5.3%) considered it moderately important, 1(1.1%) regarded it as slightly necessary, and none asserted that it was not important.

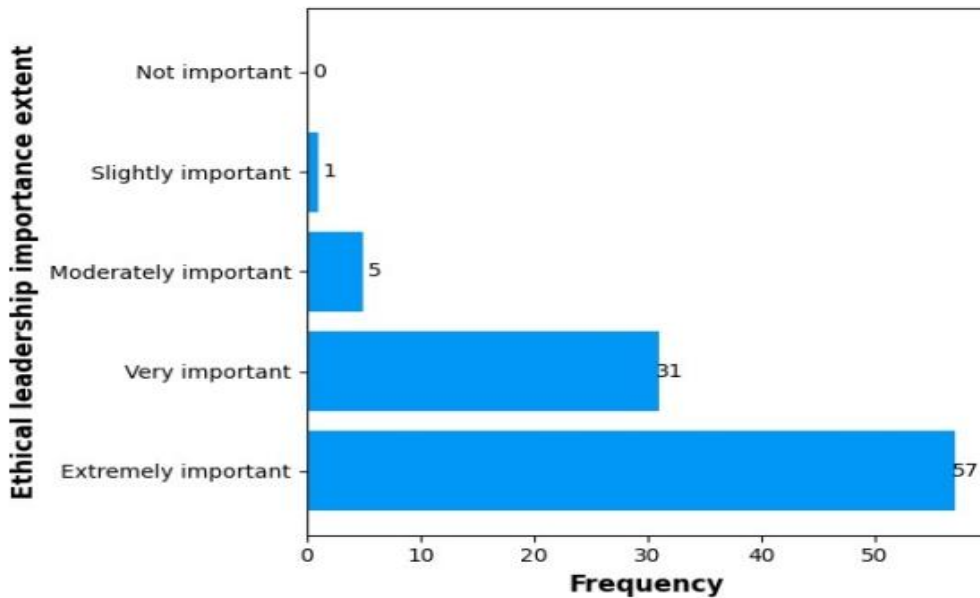


Figure 2. Extent of the Importance of ethical Leadership in attaining Sustainable Development in Tanzania (N=94)

Source: Field Data, 2024.

3.4 The prioritization of ethical leadership in their decision process in Tanzania.

The respondents were asked to express their views on whether leaders in Tanzania prioritize ethical leadership in decision-making. Table 2 indicates that 68 respondents, constituting 72.3%, answered negatively. The current Tanzanian leaders do not prioritize ethical leadership in their decision-making processes. Approximately 18 respondents (19.1%) expressed uncertainty, whereas just eight answered positively.

Table 2: Prioritization of ethical leadership in decision-making processes

Responses	Frequency (N=94)	Percentages
Yes	8	8.5
No	68	72.3
Not sure	18	19.1

Source: Field Data, 2024

3.5 The challenges to the state of ethical leadership in Tanzania

The respondents were requested to identify the three most significant obstacles to principles of ethical leadership in Tanzania. Figure 3 indicates that 81 respondents (86.2%) recognized corruption as the foremost barrier to ethical leadership, followed by lack of accountability at 73 respondents

(77.3%), political engagement at 45 respondents (47.9%), inadequate education/training at 15 respondents (16%), economic pressure at 14 respondents (14.9%), and others at six respondents (1.1%).

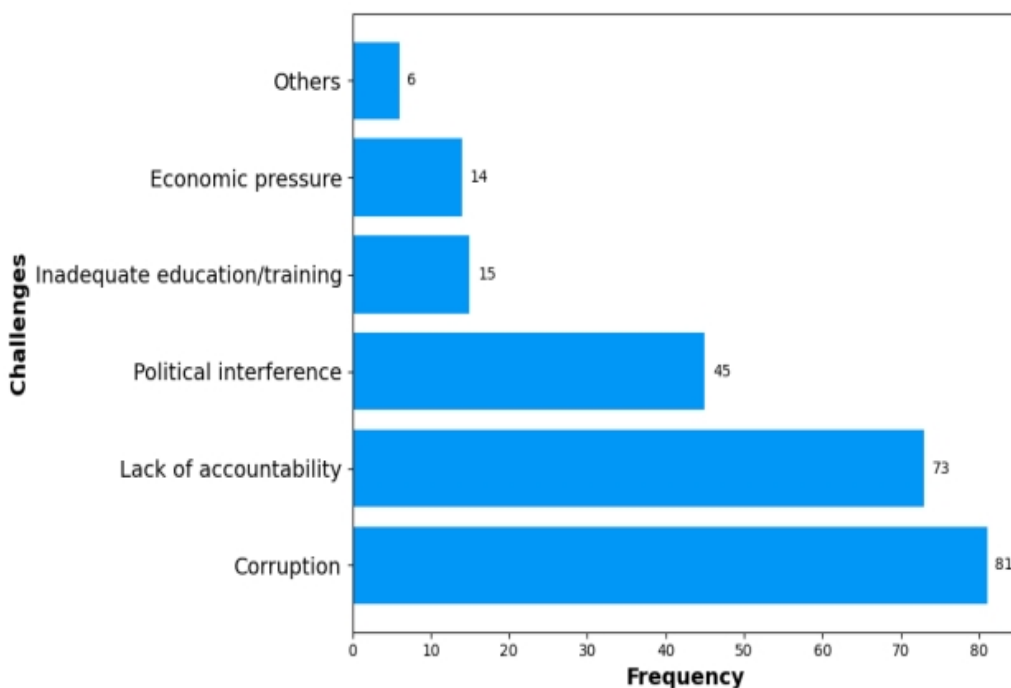


Figure 3: The three main challenges to ethical leadership in Tanzania (N= 94)
Source: Field Data, 2024

3.6 Strategies for integrating JK Nyerere's ethical framework into contemporary leadership

The participants were requested to suggest techniques for integrating JK Nyerere's ethical framework into contemporary leadership. Table 3 indicates that 75 respondents (79.8%) advocate prioritizing integrity and anti-corruption practices as a principal strategy for incorporating Nyerere's ethical principles into contemporary leadership in Tanzania. This is followed by promoting self-reliance and sustainable development at 66 respondents (70.2%), promoting national unity and inclusivity at 62 respondents (66.0%), and integrating Nyerere's ethical philosophy into curricula. The least favored strategy is establishing leadership awards based on Nyerere's values, with 26 respondents (27.7%).

Table 3: Strategies for integrating ethical principles into contemporary leadership

Strategies	Frequency (N=94)	Percentages
Incorporate Nyerere's ethical philosophy into curricular	54	57.4
Focus on integrity and anti - corruption practices	75	79.8
Promote national unity and inclusivity	62	66.0
Integrate civic and ethical education	53	56.4
Promote self-reliance and sustainable development	66	70.2
Emphasize ethical political leadership	52	55.3
Create mentorship programs with ethical leaders	39	41.5
Establish leadership awards based on Nyerere's values	26	27.7

Source: Field Data, 2024

4. Discussions

This study examined the relevance of Nyerere's ethical leadership philosophy in addressing contemporary governance challenges and promoting sustainable development in Tanzania. The key principles of J.K. Nyerere's ethical leadership framework were examined, the most significant challenges were identified, and strategies for incorporating Nyerere's legacy of ethical leadership into contemporary management practices to promote sustainable development were proposed. The results indicated that respondents identified integrity, social justice, unity, equality, and self-reliance as key principles within Nyerere's ethical framework for leadership. Nonetheless, integrity has been recognized as the most difficult principle for contemporary leadership to maintain. These findings contradict Northouse (2018), who contends that ethical leadership is essential in cultivating organizational cultures that foster ethical decision-making and social responsibility. This implies that confident contemporary leaders lack adequate integrity, despite several studies emphasizing its importance.

The research indicated that ethical leadership is essential for sustainable development in Tanzania. The findings align consistently with Nyangena et al (2019), whose research suggests that sustainable leadership is crucial for the societal advancement of sustainable development. Based on this knowledge, it is unequivocally true that ethical leadership is vital for achieving sustainable development. The study also indicated that contemporary Tanzanian executives do not value ethical leadership in decision-making. These findings contradict Northouse (2018), who asserts that ethical leadership is pivotal in

cultivating organizational cultures that foster ethical decision-making and social responsibility. Decision-making that fails to conform to ethical leadership becomes unproductive and inefficient in implementation.

The study identified corruption, lack of accountability, and political interference as the three main challenges to ethical leadership in Tanzania. The findings contradict TahaMitugn (2021), who asserts that the difficulties of ethical practice exhibited a significant average regarding internal elements related to the communication of moral principles in interactions with subordinates. The study suggested strategies for incorporating Nyerere's ethical principles into modern leadership in Tanzania, including integrity and anti-corruption, promoting self-reliance and sustainable development, advancing national unity and inclusivity, and integrating Nyerere's philosophy into curricula.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

The study indicates that integrity is the most challenging idea for contemporary leadership to maintain, ethical leadership is crucial for attaining sustainable development, and Tanzanian leaders do not emphasize ethical leadership in their decision-making processes. The paper recommends that management prioritize integrity in everyday management and promote ethical leadership that supports sustainable development. Policymakers should consider ethical leadership concerns during their policy review and formulation processes.

6. Acknowledgement

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