

The Impact of Nyerere's Ethical Leadership on Sustainable Development Outcomes in Tanzania

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Abstract

This study analyses the concept of ethical Leadership defined by Julius Nyerere, highlighting the importance of integrity, accountability, and transparency in sustainable development. Through a critical documentary review, this paper explores different sources to uncover insights that deepen understanding of the link between ethical Leadership and sustainable practices. Utilising Servant Leadership Theory as a guide, the research offers a thorough perspective on how ethical Leadership can foster sustainable development. This context pays tribute to Nyerere's legacy and is a pertinent lens for analysing the relationship between ethical Leadership and sustainability. The paper aims to gather current evidence concerning Nyerere's principles and their impact on sustainable development in Tanzania. His Leadership resulted in notable advancements in education and health, demonstrating that ethical governance can yield significant societal benefits. However, critiques of Nyerere's approach expose challenges such as bureaucratic inefficiencies and corruption, which have impeded the realisation of his ideals. These critiques highlight the necessity for adaptable ethical frameworks that address systemic issues rather than relying solely on theoretical concepts. To build on Nyerere's legacy, contemporary leaders should integrate these principles into comprehensive governance strategies, such as establishing independent oversight bodies and promoting participatory governance. Education about ethical Leadership is vital for cultivating a new generation of committed leaders. By addressing existing challenges and embracing Nyerere's principles, modern leaders can foster inclusive and resilient development strategies aligned with social justice and economic stability, paving the way for sustainable development in Tanzania and beyond.

Keywords: Ethical leadership, Sustainable development, Integrity, Accountability, Transparency

1. Introduction

Achieving Sustainable Development in Africa is significant and requires emphasizing ethical Leadership. Moral Leadership is crucial for promoting sustainable development, particularly in addressing pressing global issues such as climate change, inequality, and social justice. In this context, Julius Nyerere, the founding father of Tanzania, stands out as a pivotal figure of ethical Leadership whose principles of integrity, accountability, and transparency have shaped governance and development policies in the region (Ahmad & Gao, 2017). The Nyerere spirit of ethical Leadership aligns closely with Servant Leadership Theory, which emphasises prioritising the needs of others and fostering a culture of ethics in decision-making. They advocated for leaders prioritising community well-being, urging them to serve the public interest over personal gain (Greenleaf, 1977; Nyerere, 1968a).

The concept of ethical Leadership is considered the ladder towards achieving sustainable development. Several scholars define Leadership as the ability to influence or guide others towards a common task (Kassala, 2016; Rowe, 2007; Rost, 1993). Nyerere (1968a) defined Leadership as a process that involves guiding and inspiring people towards a common goal. For Nyerere, Leadership is an act of service that requires selflessness, empathy, and strong dedication to the development and well-being of the people. Nyerere's philosophy of Leadership was deeply rooted in his belief in self-reliance, unity, and collective responsibility. He believed that effective Leadership should be grounded in equality, justice, and the empowerment of others (Nyerere, 1968a & 1968b). His philosophy aligns with SDG 10, which aims to reduce inequality within and among countries. His vision of socialism also aimed to promote social equity, reduce disparities, and fairly distribute resources among the population.

Ethical Leadership is a complex idea that scholars from different fields can understand in various ways. Kassala (2016) describes ethics and Leadership as two subject matters that result in an "ethical leadership" construct when juxtaposed. He related ethical Leadership to trust, honesty, consideration, charisma, and fairness. Brown and Treviño (2006) define ethical Leadership as showcasing normative, appropriate behaviour through one's actions and relationship with others and encouraging such behaviour among followers; they stress that ethical leaders exemplify ethical conduct and foster an environment that motivates followers to act ethically. Ciulla (2004) broadly views ethical Leadership through the lens of virtue ethics, indicating that ethical leaders exhibit virtue and focus on the well-being of their followers and the organisation; she argues that ethical Leadership entails subsequent rules and developing moral character. While Greenleaf (1977) introduced the term

"servant leadership", he contends that ethical Leadership fundamentally revolves around serving others; he believes that ethical leaders prioritise the needs of their followers and the community, thus fostering trust and collaboration. Liden et al. (2014) identify ethical Leadership as an essential element of service-oriented Leadership, claiming that ethical leaders are dedicated to the growth and welfare of their followers, which in turn improves overall organisational performance. Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) assert that ethical leaders are reliable and truthful, which is vital for earning the respect and loyalty of their followers; they highlight the significance of integrity in effective Leadership. This definition encapsulates the spirit of Nyerere's philosophy, which holds that ethical governance is crucial for national progress, advocating for integrity as a core quality for leaders and emphasising that moral and ethical conduct should guide all governmental actions (Nyerere, 1973). From these viewpoints, ethical Leadership is characterised by leading with integrity, promoting ethical principles, serving followers, and creating an atmosphere of trust and equity. Collectively, Ethical Leadership, through these viewpoints, underscores the significance of moral character, the impact of ethical behaviour, and the importance of serving the common good in leadership positions, which is crucial in advancing Sustainable Development.

The concept of sustainable development arises from the fact that global Leadership is confronted with several challenges, including climate change, poverty, corruption, social injustice, environmental destruction, and civil war. The concept has been given many definitions since it emerged in the 1980s. It is considered a quest for developing and sustaining qualities of life and involves the subjective and objective dimensions of human well-being (De Vries & Petersen, 2009). According to Krambia-Kapardis (2023), ethical Leadership is a prerequisite for sustainable development. A lack of ethical Leadership leads to wastage and misuse of public resources, thereby denying society an opportunity to sustain its development (Nyangena *et al.*, 2019), while moral Leadership acts as a catalyst in sustaining growth. Leadership becomes a vehicle that steers positive changes expected to sustain development (Greenleaf, 1977).

Nyerere's leadership philosophy, encapsulated in his concept of Ujamaa, emphasises collective responsibility and the prioritisation of public interest over personal gain (Nyerere, 1974). This framework addresses the ethical dimensions of Leadership and provides a foundational perspective for sustainable development initiatives in Tanzania and beyond (Mchunguzi, 2023). Nyerere ascended to power during a transformative period in Tanzania's history, marked by the struggle for independence and the subsequent need to

unify a diverse population. His Governance approach was informed by a commitment to ethical principles, which he viewed as essential for achieving a just and equitable society. This moral stance was crucial in fostering trust between the government and its citizens, a key ingredient for sustainable development (Nyerere, 1974). Nyerere articulated that effective Leadership must originate from a profound commitment to serve the populace rather than the leaders' interests. This commitment to the public good resonates deeply with contemporary discussions around ethical governance, especially in regions grappling with corruption and ineffective Leadership.

Nyerere believed leaders should embody moral principles and act as role models for their communities. Integrity enhances a leader's credibility and fosters an environment where ethical behaviour is expected and rewarded. When leaders prioritise ethical conduct, they contribute to a culture of accountability, making it imperative to answer questions about their actions and decisions (Ahmad and Gao, 2017). This accountability is essential for building trust within society, which is fundamental for effectively implementing sustainable development policies (Mkandawire, 2001). Transparency is a critical element of Nyerere's leadership model, involving open communication and Inclusivity in decision-making processes. By promoting transparency, leaders can engage citizens more effectively, allowing them to participate actively in governance. Nyerere understood that an informed citizenry is crucial for holding leaders accountable and ensuring that policies reflect the needs and aspirations of the populace. This principle of participatory governance aligns closely with sustainable development objectives, which aim to empower individuals and communities (Klitgaard, 1991).

The positive outcomes of Nyerere's ethical Leadership are evident across various sectors in Tanzania, particularly education and health. His policies centred on universal education led to significant improvements in literacy rates, contributing to a more skilled workforce essential for economic growth (Lewis, 2006). Initiatives focusing on expanding healthcare access resulted in better health indicators, such as reduced infant mortality rates. These achievements underscore how ethical governance can translate into tangible benefits for society, highlighting the enduring relevance of Nyerere's principles in contemporary governance and development.

Despite the successes associated with Nyerere's Leadership, critiques have emerged regarding the effectiveness and applicability of his principles in achieving sustainable development goals. Some scholars argue that bureaucratic inefficiencies and systemic corruption have undermined the

realisation of Nyerere's vision (Mkandawire, 2001; Klitgaard, 1991). These critiques emphasise the necessity for ethical leadership frameworks to be adaptable and responsive to the specific contexts in which they are applied.

Ethical Leadership is acknowledged as essential for achieving sustainable development in Africa and Tanzania, particularly where governance challenges persist (Mchunguzi, 2023; UN, 2015; Mkandawire, 2001). Despite Julius Nyerere's foundational principles of integrity, accountability, and transparency, which are critical for fostering ethical Leadership, their application in contemporary Tanzanian leadership practices remains under-explored. Hence, this study aims to analyse how Nyerere's ethical principles can inform effective Leadership that aligns with sustainable development, addressing barriers such as corruption and lack of accountability that hinder progress towards Sustainable Development. Understanding the interplay between Nyerere's principles and ethical Leadership is crucial for developing frameworks that promote good governance and sustainable practices. By examining these insights, the study contributes to the discourse on responsible Leadership and offers practical recommendations for policymakers and educators. Ultimately, this research seeks to bridge the gap between historical, ethical frameworks, and contemporary leadership challenges, providing a road map for enhancing governance and fostering sustainable development in Tanzania.

This paper focuses on two key areas: (i) explores the intersection of ethical Leadership and sustainable development through the lens of Nyerere's principles of Leadership, and (ii) examines how Nyerere's principles of Leadership have informed contemporary governance practices in Tanzania. It also aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on leadership challenges in Africa and provide insights that may apply to other contexts facing similar challenges. Ultimately, this exploration of Nyerere's principles offers valuable lessons for contemporary leaders, emphasising the need for a robust ethical framework that prioritises the public good, fosters trust, and promotes inclusive governance for nurturing sustainable development.

2. Research Methodology

This study employed a critical literature review approach, which offers numerous benefits that enhance the quality and depth of the study. A critical review integrates various viewpoints and methods, provides a comprehensive understanding of the topic, identifies knowledge gaps, and synthesises diverse perspectives. (Torrance, 2012; Okoli, 2015; Fink, 2010). Data was collected guided by two specific questions: (i) How do Nyerere's principles shape the framework of ethical Leadership within sustainable development? and (ii) What

are the existing critiques regarding the impact of Nyerere's ethical Leadership on sustainable development outcomes in Tanzania?

The Mwalimu Nyerere Memorial Academy Library and Google Scholar were used to ensure a diverse selection of sources, which included textbooks, eBooks, peer-reviewed articles, conference proceedings papers, etc. The selection process for the documents involved selecting papers based on keywords, followed by an evaluation of the titles and abstracts. The keywords used to search for papers included ethical Leadership, sustainable development, integrity, accountability, and transparency.

A broad literature search was conducted using various databases, gathering a wide range of literature based on Fink (2017). This study established inclusion and exclusion criteria for selecting relevant studies, following Torrance (2012), to narrow down the literature that significantly contributes to the research questions. The articles explicitly reviewed and linked ethics-related leadership and sustainable development with Nyerere's leadership principles.

3. Findings and Discussion

The findings and discussions in this paper are derived from a critical literature review guided by two key research questions. (i) How do Nyerere's principles shape the framework of ethical Leadership within the context of sustainable development? and (ii) What critiques exist regarding the impact of Nyerere's ethical Leadership on sustainable development outcomes in Tanzania? This analysis delved into the fundamental aspects of Nyerere's leadership principles, examining their role in shaping ethical governance and their influence on contemporary governance practices in Tanzania. The paper also reflects on critiques of Nyerere's principles and their practical applicability in today's leadership context.

3.1 The Influence of Nyerere's Principles on Shaping Ethical Leadership Within the Framework of Sustainable Development

Julius Nyerere's leadership principles, rooted in integrity, accountability, and transparency, continue to influence ethical leadership frameworks, particularly in sustainable development. Nyerere believed effective Leadership should focus on the public good and moral values over personal gain. His vision for Tanzania, articulated through the Arusha Declaration, underscored the importance of social equity, self-reliance, and participatory governance. These principles align with the global agenda for sustainable development and economic well-being. Nyerere's philosophy provides a solid foundation for ethical Leadership that supports sustainable and inclusive growth in contemporary governance.

3.1.1 Role of Integrity in Nyerere's Philosophy of Ethical Leadership

Nyerere's commitment to integrity was a cornerstone of his leadership philosophy, serving as a model for contemporary leaders facing ethical dilemmas. For Nyerere, integrity was about personal honesty and a leader's responsibility to the community development. His well-known claim that a leader's primary responsibility is to serve the people (Nyerere, 1968c) illustrates his conviction that the public good should come first in Leadership, a key tenet of the Servant Leadership philosophy (Greenleaf, 1977). Throughout his presidency (1964–1985), Nyerere stressed the importance of moral integrity as a cornerstone of effective Leadership. Likewise, Mazrui (1997) argued that integrity fosters social trust, which is crucial for sustainable development. Nyerere reinforced this principle in his speeches, particularly in the early years of Tanzania's independence, where he insisted on no leadership without integrity. These ideas were also reflected during the Arusha Declaration of 1967, which articulated his vision for socialism and self-reliance. Nyerere's focus on integrity offers a valuable lesson for contemporary governance, especially in navigating ethical challenges, and implies that moral integrity is crucial for sustainable development.

3.1.2 The Fundamental Role of Accountability in Nyerere's Governance Philosophy

Accountability is a cornerstone of Nyerere's leadership ideologies. He believed leaders should be answerable to their constituents, promoting a culture where citizens can hold their leaders responsible for their actions. Nyerere insisted that the government be accountable to the people. He often expressed this sentiment in his speeches, particularly during the early years of Tanzania's independence, where he stressed the need for leaders to serve their constituents (Nyerere, 1968c). This principle aligns with Mkandawire's (2001) assertion that "accountability is not merely a formal requirement but a fundamental aspect of governance that fosters trust and participation among citizens. The perspective echoes Nyerere's emphasis on the need for leaders to be responsive to the needs of their people. This perspective aligns with Samia Suluhu's current leadership approach. She embraced accountability, much like Nyerere's governance values, focusing on reducing corruption and enhancing transparency in her administration (Suluhu, 2021). Mkandawire (2001) supported this when he reported that accountability mechanisms are essential for preventing corruption and ensuring that development initiatives align with the needs of the people. Klitgaard (1991) views corruption as a process that thrives when there is a lack of accountability. This view reinforces Nyerere's belief that accountability is crucial for reducing corruption and ensuring that

development initiatives are implemented effectively. Likewise, Lewis (2006) expounded that accountable Leadership is essential for effective governance and sustainable development, highlighting how leaders who embrace accountability contribute to social stability and economic progress. This highlight aligns with Nyerere's assertion that development must focus on the welfare of the people. He believed leaders who do not account for their actions cannot expect the people's trust. It also indicates that Nyerere's accountability leadership principle is vital for sustainable development, and people's welfare remains crucial for effective and sustainable progress today.

3.1.3 Nyerere's Philosophy on Transparency and Its Influence on Sustainable Development Policies

Transparency complements Nyerere's principles of integrity and accountability, facilitates an environment where information flows openly, and builds trust between leaders and the public. Nyerere believed transparency was essential for effective Leadership. He posited that without transparency, trust between the people and their leaders cannot exist (Nyerere, 1968). This suggestion aligns with his broader philosophy of open governance, where leaders must operate in the public eye. Transparency, for Nyerere, was critical for ensuring citizens could see the alignment between leadership intentions and actions. Mkandawire (2001) sees it as integral to accountability. Klitgaard (1991) further asserts that corruption and inefficiency thrive in darkness; transparency is the light that reveals the path to accountability.

Incorporating Nyerere's principles into ethical leadership frameworks strengthens efforts towards sustainable development. To practice integrity and transparency, leaders can ensure policies are designed with the public good in mind, addressing immediate socio-economic challenges and promoting long-term social equity and environmental sustainability. This commitment to ethical governance aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which aim to create equitable and sustainable solutions to global challenges by 2030 (UN, 2015). Nyerere's emphasis on transparency is crucial for leaders establishing trust and promoting accountability, which are necessary for achieving sustainable, inclusive development and advancing the SDGs. This emphasis implies that transparency fosters trust, which drives the SDGs and ensures lasting, inclusive progress.

3.2 Critiques of Nyerere's Principles on Ethical Leadership

Julius Nyerere's principles of ethical Leadership were designed to guide Tanzania toward sustainable development. However, critiques have emerged

regarding the effectiveness and applicability of these principles in achieving desired outcomes. A significant concern is the bureaucratic inefficiencies in implementing Nyerere's Ujamaa policies. These policies aimed to promote collective farming and social equity but resulted in a centralised governance model that stifled local initiative and adaptability (Mkapa, 2006). Scholars such as Klitgaard (1991) note that the absence of robust institutional checks allowed corrupt practices to flourish, eroding public trust in government. This corruption undermined Nyerere's vision for ethical Leadership and diluted the effectiveness of policies intended to uplift the populace. The entrenchment of corruption poses questions about the feasibility of achieving ethical governance in a system where personal interests often overshadow public welfare. The contextual applicability of Nyerere's principles has also been examined. At the same time, his vision was primarily a response to the socio-economic challenges of post-colonial Tanzania; some scholars argue that these principles may not be universally applicable in different political or cultural contexts (Mugabi, 2010).

The critiques of Nyerere's principles reflect the complexities of translating ethical Leadership into tangible outcomes in sustainable development. The interplay of bureaucratic inefficiencies, corruption, and contextual challenges is necessary for adaptable and inclusive frameworks. These insights contribute to a deeper understanding of Nyerere's legacy and provide valuable lessons for contemporary leaders seeking to navigate the challenges of governance and sustainable development.

3. Conclusion and Recommendations

Julius Nyerere's principles of integrity, accountability, and transparency remain essential for fostering ethical Leadership in Tanzania, especially in the pursuit of sustainable development. His vision of collective responsibility urged leaders to prioritise public interests over personal gain, fostering trust, which is crucial for long-term progress. By ensuring accountability, leaders are answerable to their communities, while transparency facilitates open dialogue and inclusive decision-making, empowering citizens to participate in governance. These demonstrate the tangible benefits of ethical governance and underscore the relevance of Nyerere's principles today. Bureaucratic inefficiencies and persistent corruption are the most common critiques. These criticisms suggest the need for adaptable ethical frameworks that address systemic issues rather than relying solely on theoretical ideals.

To build on Nyerere's legacy, current and future leaders in Tanzania should integrate his principles into comprehensive governance strategies. This build includes establishing strong accountability and transparency mechanisms, such as independent oversight bodies, to combat corruption and enhance public trust. Additionally, fostering participatory governance and promoting ethical leadership education will help cultivate a new generation of leaders committed to integrity and social progress. Embracing these measures can help Tanzania progress toward a more resilient and inclusive future, fostering sustainable development.

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