

Entrepreneurial Leadership Strategy in Public Administration: Challenges and Pathways in Local Governments in Zanzibar

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Abstract

This study investigates the barriers to implementing Entrepreneurial Leadership Strategy (ELS) in Zanzibar's Local Government Authorities (LGAs) and explores pathways for enhancing adaptive governance. A mixed-methods approach was employed with a total sample of 300 respondents, comprising 210 local government officials, 30 private sector actors, and 60 community elders. Quantitative surveys were complemented by qualitative interviews to capture both perceptions and practices across diverse stakeholder groups. Findings reveal that more than 70% of respondents identified bureaucratic rigidity, hierarchical culture, risk-averse decision-making, and limited leadership innovation as the primary obstacles to ELS adoption. These structural and cultural barriers were found to reinforce systemic inertia, limiting the ability of LGAs to embrace entrepreneurial governance. However, evidence also suggests that employee engagement and innovative leadership practices can mitigate resistance, while resource constraints and inflexible regulatory frameworks continue to pose significant challenges. The analysis is interpreted through Entrepreneurial, Transformational, and Contingency theories, demonstrating that institutional context and leadership behavior jointly determine organizational adaptability. The study contributes to theory by empirically linking structural, leadership, and environmental factors with resistance to entrepreneurial governance. Practically, it recommends integrated interventions such as fostering risk-tolerant leadership, promoting employee participation, and strategically aligning resources and regulations to strengthen service delivery and accelerate socio-economic transformation in Zanzibar's public sector.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Leadership Strategy, Public Administration, Local Government Authorities, Challenges, Pathways

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurial Leadership (EL) has increasingly emerged as a transformative approach within public administration, emphasizing innovation, proactiveness, opportunity recognition, and calculated risk-taking as mechanisms for enhancing

institutional performance (Renko et al., 2021; Bagheri& Harrison, 2022). Unlike conventional bureaucratic leadership models that prioritize procedural compliance and hierarchical control, entrepreneurial leadership integrates entrepreneurial thinking into managerial practice, thereby enabling public institutions to respond more effectively to dynamic, complex, and resource-constrained environments. This paradigm is particularly relevant to Local Government Authorities (LGAs), which serve as the foundational tier of governance and are mandated to deliver essential public services in an efficient, equitable, and responsive manner. In developing governance contexts such as Zanzibar, LGAs continue to face persistent challenges including service delivery inefficiencies, limited institutional innovation, weak managerial capacity, and declining public trust. Despite ongoing decentralization and public sector reform initiatives, leadership practices within many LGAs remain deeply embedded in rigid bureaucratic structures characterized by centralized decision-making, procedural rigidity, and limited autonomy. These conditions constrain managerial discretion and inhibit proactive problem-solving and innovation, leaving the potential contribution of Entrepreneurial Leadership Strategies (ELSs) insufficiently realized (Karyotakis&Moustakas, 2023; Shava&Muringa, 2024).

Although the relevance of entrepreneurial leadership in public sector reform has been widely acknowledged in global literature, there is a notable scarcity of empirical research examining its application within the specific socio-political, administrative, and institutional context of Zanzibar's LGAs. Existing studies predominantly focus on developed economies or national-level institutions, offering limited insight into how entrepreneurial leadership functions within small island governance systems marked by bureaucratic inertia, political influence, and constrained resources (Bagheri& Harrison, 2022; UNDP, 2024). In particular, the interaction between entrenched bureaucratic culture and leadership agency in shaping the adoption and effectiveness of ELSs at the local government level in Zanzibar remains under-explored. Furthermore, prior research has inadequately examined how institutional capacity, organizational culture, and political dynamics jointly influence the implementation of entrepreneurial leadership practices in decentralized governance systems (African Peer Review Mechanism, 2023).

Against this background, this study seeks to address these gaps by examining the challenges affecting the application of Entrepreneurial Leadership Strategies in Zanzibar's LGAs and identifying viable pathways for strengthening their institutionalization. Explicitly, the study assesses the extent to which ELSs are applied within LGAs, examines the institutional, capacity-related, and political factors influencing their application, and proposes strategic pathways for enhancing entrepreneurial leadership practices to improve public service delivery. By providing context-specific empirical evidence from Zanzibar, the study

contributes to the advancement of public leadership scholarship, while offering practical insights to policymakers and public administrators seeking to strengthen leadership effectiveness in local governance.

2. Literature Review

This study is grounded in an integrated theoretical framework that synthesizes Entrepreneurial Leadership Theory, Transformational Leadership Theory, and Contingency Theory to explain how leadership behaviors, motivational mechanisms, and contextual factors interact to shape the application of Entrepreneurial Leadership Strategies in LGAs. Entrepreneurial Leadership Theory provides the core foundation by emphasizing leaders' capacity to identify opportunities, mobilize resources, and pursue innovative strategies under conditions of uncertainty (Renko et al., 2021). Transformational Leadership Theory complements this perspective by explaining the motivational and relational mechanisms through which entrepreneurial leadership behaviors are translated into collective organizational action, emphasizing vision articulation, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation as processes for influencing followers' attitudes and behaviors (Bass & Riggio, 2019). Contingency Theory provides the contextual lens necessary for understanding variations in the effectiveness of ELSs across different institutional settings, positing that leadership effectiveness is contingent upon situational factors such as organizational structure, resource availability, regulatory frameworks, and political environment (Fiedler, 2021).

Collectively, these theories form an integrated analytical framework in which Entrepreneurial Leadership Theory defines the strategic leadership behaviors under investigation, Transformational Leadership Theory explains the motivational and cultural processes that enable those behaviors, and Contingency Theory accounts for contextual constraints and enablers influencing their effectiveness. This synthesized framework guides the empirical analysis of challenges and pathways associated with the application of Entrepreneurial Leadership Strategies in Zanzibar's LGAs and provides a robust theoretical basis for interpreting the study's findings (Shava&Muringa, 2024; UNDP, 2024).

3. Research Methodology

The study adopted a mixed-methods research design, specifically a convergent parallel approach, to examine the challenges and pathways associated with the implementation of Entrepreneurial Leadership Strategies (ELSs) in Zanzibar's Local Government Authorities (LGAs). This design was chosen because it allows for the simultaneous collection and independent analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, followed by integration at the interpretation stage. Such an approach strengthens validity by triangulating statistical relationships with participants lived experiences, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding

of leadership dynamics in public sector governance (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Feters & Freshwater, 2015).

The study was conducted in selected six LGAs across Unguja and Pemba islands, which represent the core administrative units responsible for service delivery and development implementation. Zanzibar's dual administrative structure, centralized policy control, resource limitations, and ongoing decentralization reforms make it a particularly suitable context for examining how entrepreneurial leadership interacts with bureaucratic systems and political dynamics (UNDP, 2024).

The target population comprised of key stakeholders directly involved in or affected by leadership and service delivery processes within LGAs, including local government officials, private sector representatives, community leaders, and policymakers. For the quantitative component, a stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure proportional representation across stakeholder categories and administrative levels. A total sample of 300 respondents was drawn, comprising 210 local government staffs from selected six LGAs. This sample size was justified based on established guidelines for social science research, ensuring sufficient statistical power to detect meaningful relationships among variables (Hair et al., 2021). While, for the qualitative component, purposive sampling was used to select 30 key informants, including senior officials, departmental heads, community leaders, private sectors actors and policymakers, along with 60 focus groups across (equal to 10 from each six LGAs). This strategy ensured the inclusion of information-rich participants with direct knowledge of leadership practices and institutional reforms. Interviews and focus groups continued until thematic saturation was achieved, ensuring that no new substantive insights emerged (Guest et al., 2020).

Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to measure constructs related to ELSs and public service delivery. The instrument included Likert-scale items on innovation orientation, leadership mindset, resource utilization, adaptability, institutional support, and service delivery outcomes. The questionnaire was developed from validated scales in leadership and public administration literature and reviewed by subject-matter experts to ensure content validity. Meanwhile, a pilot test was conducted to refine clarity and reliability, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients confirming internal consistency (Tavakol&Dennick, 2011). Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews and focus groups guided by protocols covering leadership practices, bureaucratic constraints, institutional culture, political influences, and perceived pathways for strengthening entrepreneurial leadership. The quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS, with descriptive statistics summarizing respondent characteristics and regression models examining the relationship between ELS dimensions and service delivery outcomes. Whereas, Qualitative

data were analyzed through thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2019) systematic process of coding, categorization, and theme development. Integration of findings occurred at the interpretation stage, where quantitative results were compared with qualitative insights to identify convergence, complementarity, and divergence. This integrative analysis enabled the study to explain not only whether ELSs influence service delivery, but also how and why such effects occur within Zanzibar's institutional and socio-political context.

4. Results and Discussion

The findings revealed that administrative and bureaucratic nature, and capacity building – institutional enhancement, and resistance to change in Zanzibar's LGAs inhibit the effective implementation of entrepreneurial leadership strategies. At the same time, the evidence highlights potential pathways that can foster innovation and resilience. These issues and opportunities are discussed in detail under the following thematical categories:

Theme: 1 Administrative and Bureaucratic Nature in Local Government Authorities

Table 1: Show the Administrative and Bureaucratic Nature variables in LGAs

Variable	Strong Agreed	Agreed	Not Agreed	Mean	Std. Dev
Communication Channels of LGAs	84(40.0)	84(40.0)	42(20.0)	2.20	0.76
Employee Engagement and willingness on LGAs	57(27.1)	87(41.4)	66(31.4)	1.96	0.80
Innovation and creativity to the LGAs leaders	58(27.6)	93(44.3)	59(28.1)	1.99	0.79
Leadership Mind-set of LGAs	67(31.9)	73(34.8)	70(33.3)	1.98	0.82
Training, Learning and Development of LGAs	57(27.1)	100(47.6)	53(25.2)	2.02	0.74
Organizational Culture & bureaucratic Structure	57(27.1)	71(33.8)	82(39.0)	1.88	0.83
Resistance to change among LGAs staff	67(31.9)	77(36.7)	66(31.4)	2.01	0.81

Source: *Field Data, (2024)*

Table 1 presents the findings on the administrative and bureaucratic nature of LGAs, illustrating how structural arrangements shape leadership behavior, institutional culture, and service delivery outcomes. At the structural communication level, 80% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that communication channels are ineffective (Mean=2.20, SD=0.76). Although communication mechanisms formally exist, the high agreement suggests that they operate in a hierarchical and centralized manner.

In terms of human engagement, 68.5% of respondents acknowledged limited employee engagement and willingness (Mean=1.96, SD=0.80). Similarly, 71.9% agreed that innovation and creativity among LGA leaders are constrained (Mean=1.99, SD=0.79). These results indicate that administrative rigidities not

only affect procedural operations but also undermine motivational and innovative capacities within institutions.

Regarding managerial orientation, leadership mindset reflects a divided perception, with 66.7% agreement and 33.3% disagreement (Mean=1.98, SD=0.82), suggesting inconsistency in leadership approaches. While 74.7% recognized the existence of training, learning, and development initiatives (Mean=2.02, SD=0.74).

At the cultural and structural level, 60.9% of respondents perceived organizational culture and bureaucratic structures as rigid (Mean=1.88, SD=0.83). Resistance to change remains pronounced, with 68.6% agreement (Mean=2.01, SD=0.81). Recent studies confirm that bureaucratic limitations continue to undermine service delivery in African local governments, despite reforms aimed at improving efficiency (Shava&Muringa, 2024; Mutereko et al., 2024).

Focus Group Discussions (FDGs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) further substantiated these concerns, revealing deep-seated institutional and managerial constraints within LGAs. Participants frequently described communication as “top-down and one-directional,” leaving little room for feedback or collaborative problem-solving. One key informant noted,

“By the time approvals come through, the opportunity has already passed, leaving local leaders unable to act on pressing needs. These lengthy bureaucratic procedures slow down decision-making and prevent timely responses to community priorities. This delay not only undermines efficiency but also erodes trust, as citizens see their concerns go unaddressed. Leaders become frustrated and hesitant to propose new initiatives, knowing that approvals may arrive too late to be effective. Ultimately, the system reinforces inertia, making planning and innovation less meaningful in practice.”

Other respondents also emphasized that resistance to change is embedded within institutional culture rather than stemming solely from individual attitudes. One human resource officer observed,

“People are not necessarily against change; they are reacting to a system that penalizes mistakes more than it rewards creativity. When innovation is not recognized and errors are heavily scrutinized, employees naturally avoid taking risks. Over time, this creates a culture where maintaining the status quo feels safer than experimenting with new approaches.”

Participants from FGD in the NGOs and community leaders across LGAs highlighted how bureaucratic layering affects morale and innovation. One NGO’s Activist remarked,

“Every proposal must pass through numerous committees and formal clearances. While accountability is important, the process has become so procedural that it slows meaningful action. Staff become cautious and prefer to follow routine instructions rather than risk delays or criticism for trying something new.”

Generally, the emphasizing how bureaucratic procedures delay decision-making. One respondent from KIIs explicated,

“The resistance to change is not simply individual reluctance but a systemic issue rooted in organizational culture. Employees expressed frustration that training programs are often compliance-driven rather than designed to foster creativity or leadership growth, which explains the gap between recognition of training and limited innovation outcomes.”

These narratives align with recent research showing that organizational culture in local government often prioritizes rigid processes over adaptive leadership, thereby weakening responsiveness and innovation (Ringson&Matshabaphala, 2024; Njunwa, 2023).

From a theoretical perspective, Transformational Leadership Theory underscores the absence of inspirational leadership, explaining weak employee engagement and the persistence of resistance to change. Entrepreneurial Theory illustrates how bureaucratic culture suppresses creativity and innovation, preventing leaders from adopting proactive strategies. Contingency Theory further explains the cautious leadership mindset, as managers adapt to rigid institutional environments by avoiding risk. Together, these insights suggest that LGAs are structurally constrained, with leadership practices shaped more by bureaucratic survival than by transformational or entrepreneurial vision. This interpretation is consistent with recent scholarship emphasizing that municipal leadership struggles to accelerate transformation due to entrenched bureaucratic practices and risk-averse cultures (Mutereko et al., 2024; Shava&Muringa, 2024).

Theme: 2 Capacity Building – Institutional Enhancement in LGAs

Table 2 Show the Capacity Building – Institutional Enhancement variables in LGAs

Variable	Strong Agreed	Agreed	Not Agreed	Mean	Std. Dev
Communication Channels of LGAs	84(40.0)	84(40.0)	42(20.0)	2.20	0.76
Employee Engagement & willing on LGAs	57(27.1)	87(41.4)	66(31.4)	1.96	0.80
Innovation and creativity to the LGAs leaders	58(27.6)	93(44.3)	59(28.1)	1.99	0.79
Measurement and Evaluation LGAs goals	39(18.6)	94(44.8)	77(36.7)	1.82	0.78
Organizational Elasticity and Bureaucratic Erection	57(27.1)	71(33.8)	82(39.0)	1.88	0.83
Resource Allocation of LGAs	58(27.6)	90(42.9)	62(29.5)	1.98	0.81
Risk Aversion and decision making of LGA	58(27.6)	82(39.0)	70(33.3)	1.94	0.82
Change and self-development attitude to LGAs staff	67(31.9)	77(36.7)	66(31.4)	2.01	0.81

Dynamic and flexible LGAs goals 66(31.4) 74(35.2) 70(33.3) 1.98 0.82

Source: *Field Data, (2024)*

Table 2 presents the findings on capacity building and institutional enhancement within LGAs, revealing both the presence of development initiatives and the persistence of structural constraints that limit their effectiveness.

At the systems level, communication channels record the highest mean (Mean=2.20, SD=0.76), with 80% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing. However, despite this relatively stronger score, qualitative evidence suggests that communication remains largely hierarchical and procedural rather than participatory. Employee engagement and willingness remain comparatively weak (Mean=1.96, SD=0.80), with 31.4% disagreement, indicating that staff are not fully empowered within existing institutional frameworks.

In terms of innovation and performance management, innovation and creativity among leaders score moderately (Mean=1.99, SD=0.79), yet measurement and evaluation of LGA goals register the lowest mean (Mean=1.82, SD=0.78), with 36.7% disagreement. This indicates a significant institutional gap in performance tracking and accountability systems. Without robust monitoring mechanisms, capacity-building efforts cannot be effectively assessed or aligned with strategic objectives.

Organizational elasticity, reflecting flexibility within bureaucratic systems remains limited (Mean=1.88, SD=0.83), reinforcing perceptions of rigidity. Similarly, risk aversion in decision-making is pronounced (Mean=1.94, SD=0.82), suggesting that leaders operate cautiously within regulatory and bureaucratic constraints. Resource allocation also reflects uneven satisfaction (Mean=1.98, SD=0.81), with nearly 30% dissatisfaction, highlighting concerns about fairness and strategic prioritization.

At the behavioral level, attitudes toward change and self-development show moderate recognition (Mean=2.01, SD=0.81), while the dynamism and flexibility of LGA goals remain constrained (Mean=1.98, SD=0.82). These findings suggest that although staff may express willingness to adapt, institutional structures limit practical transformation.

This interpretation reflects broader challenges in African local governments, where capacity-building programs frequently fail to produce tangible outcomes due to weak institutional frameworks and entrenched bureaucratic cultures (Mutereko et al., 2024; Shava&Muringa, 2024).

Focus group discussions and interviews with key informants reinforced these findings. Respondents noted that training programs are often generic and externally imposed, with little alignment to local needs. One participant remarked,

“We attend workshops, but they don’t change how decisions are made in our offices, leaving staff frustrated with the lack of impact. These sessions provide knowledge and skills; the organizational

culture and decision-making structures remain rigid. As a result, the lessons learned are rarely applied, and employees feel that workshops serve more as formalities than as tools for transformation. This disconnects between training and practice discourages motivation and innovation, as staff see little evidence of change in their daily work.”

Another respondent highlighted the disconnection between skill acquisition and institutional application. One senior procurement officer noted,

“We gain new knowledge from these workshops, but the environment does not allow us to apply it. Decision-making remains centralized, and junior officers are rarely empowered to implement new ideas. Over time, staff begin to see training as a routine requirement rather than an opportunity for meaningful improvement.”

During group discussion, many participants further raised concerns about inequitable resource allocation. As one participant observed,

“Resources are not always distributed based on institutional priorities or service gaps. Sometimes allocations are influenced by political interests, which creates tension among LGAs, departments and/or communities that reduces trust in leadership.”

These argument insights highlight that inadequate skills and training are not simply a matter of insufficient programs but reflect deeper structural and cultural issues within LGAs. Recent scholarship confirms that training without institutional reform tends to reinforce bureaucratic compliance rather than foster innovation (Ringson&Matshabaphala, 2024; Njunwa, 2023).

From a theoretical perspective, Contingency Theory explains risk aversion as a rational response to regulatory and institutional pressures, where leaders avoid proactive strategies due to fear of punitive oversight. Transformational Leadership Theory suggests that training without visionary leadership fails to inspire creativity or motivate employees, which explains the persistent gap between training recognition and innovation outcomes. Entrepreneurial Theory further highlights that resource allocation and weak evaluation systems undermine the ability of leaders to take risks and pursue adaptive strategies. Together, these insights suggest that inadequate skills and training are symptomatic of deeper institutional weaknesses, where leadership practices are shaped more by bureaucratic survival than by transformational or entrepreneurial vision (Mutereko et al., 2024; Shava&Muringa, 2024).

Theme: 3 Resistance to Change within Zanzibar Local Government Authorities

Table 3 Show the Resistance to Change variables within Zanzibar LGAs

Variable	Strong	Agreed	Not	Mean	Std.
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	Agreed		Agreed		Dev
Communication Channels of LGAs	84(40.0)	84(40.0)	42(20.0)	2.20	0.76
Competitive Landscape of LGAs	53(25.2)	105(50.0)	52(24.8)	2.00	0.78
Employee Engagement and Willingness	57(27.1)	87(41.4)	66(31.4)	1.96	0.80
Innovation and Creativities Leaders	58(27.6)	93(44.3)	59(28.1)	1.99	0.79
Leadership Mind-set of LGAs	67(31.9)	73(34.8)	70(33.3)	1.98	0.82
Training, Learning and Development	57(27.1)	100(47.6)	53(25.2)	2.02	0.74
Organizational Culture &Bureaucratic Structure	57(27.1)	71(33.8)	82(39.0)	1.88	0.83
Regulatory Environment of LGAs	63(30.0)	76(36.2)	71(33.8)	1.96	0.81
Resource Allocation of LGAs	58(27.6)	90(42.9)	62(29.5)	1.98	0.81
Risk Aversion &Decision Making	58(27.6)	82(39.0)	70(33.3)	1.94	0.82

Source:Field Data, (2024)

The data from Table 3 reveal that resistance to change and bureaucratic rigidity remain significant challenges within Zanzibar LGAs. Communication channels are widely perceived as ineffective, with a mean score of 2.20 (SD=0.76), indicating that while most respondents agree communication is problematic, perceptions vary moderately. Competitive pressures are acknowledged, with a mean of 2.00 (SD=0.78) and 75.2 percent agreement, suggesting external challenges are recognized but not fully integrated into organizational responses.

Regulatory environments and risk aversion remain major barriers, with mean scores of 1.96 (SD=0.81) and 1.94 (SD=0.82) respectively, reflecting cautious decision-making and regulatory constraints that limit flexibility. Leadership mindset is divided, with a mean of 1.98 (SD=0.82) and one-third of respondents disagreeing, pointing to inconsistency in managerial approaches. Organizational culture is rated lowest (mean=1.88, SD=0.83), underscoring the persistence of bureaucratic structures that inhibit adaptability. These figures suggest that while external pressures such as competition are recognized, internal rigidity and risk-averse cultures prevent LGAs from adapting effectively. The relatively low mean scores across leadership, innovation, and organizational culture highlight systemic inertia, where bureaucratic survival outweighs proactive governance. This interpretation aligns with recent findings that bureaucratic inertia and regulatory constraints continue to limit organizational responsiveness in African local governments (Shava&Muringa, 2024; UNDP, 2024).

Focus group discussions and interviews with directors from Mkoani, ChakeChake, and North A municipalities reinforced the quantitative findings by highlighting how resistance to change is deeply embedded in organizational culture. One participant explained,

“Change is often perceived as a threat rather than an opportunity, leading to resistance within organizations. This mindset discourages innovation and prevents leaders from embracing new strategies that could improve service delivery. Instead of viewing reform as a chance to strengthen institutions, many officials see it

as a disruption to established routines. This negative perception of change reinforces bureaucratic inertia and stalls progress toward meaningful transformation.”

Similarly, during an interview with the Head of Policy and Research Department from LGAs, the issue of risk aversion was emphasized. He noted,

“Leaders often avoid adopting new approaches because failure is punished rather than treated as a learning opportunity. This punitive environment discourages experimentation and innovation, as officials fear the consequences of mistakes. Instead of fostering resilience and continuous improvement, the system reinforces caution and conformity. As a result, leadership becomes risk-averse, stifling creativity and limiting the potential for meaningful organizational transformation.”

Together, the perspectives shared by municipal directors and senior officials illustrate how both cultural resistances to change and punitive attitudes toward failure combine to weaken entrepreneurial leadership within Zanzibar’s LGAs. Their testimonies underscore the urgent need for reforms that cultivate a culture of learning, encourage innovation, and safeguard local autonomy, thereby enabling leaders to embrace change as an opportunity rather than a threat.

Employees further expressed frustration that competitive pressures are acknowledged but rarely acted upon, as bureaucratic procedures slow down decision-making and limit responsiveness. This highlights that resistance to change is not simply a matter of individual reluctance but a systemic issue shaped by institutional structures and external regulatory environments. Such conditions perpetuate risk-averse leadership practices and hinder the ability of LGAs to adapt to evolving governance demands.

Recent scholarship supports these qualitative insights, confirming that organizational cultures in local government often prioritize stability over adaptability. Studies show that this emphasis on maintaining the status quo reinforces bureaucratic inertia and discourages leaders from taking risks or experimenting with new approaches (African Peer Review Mechanism, 2023; Shava&Muringa, 2024). Aligning these findings with respondents’ voices demonstrates that both empirical evidence and lived experiences converge on the need for cultural and structural reforms to strengthen leadership capacity and institutional resilience.

From a theoretical perspective, Entrepreneurial Theory emphasizes adaptability and innovation as essential for organizational success, yet these are undermined by bureaucratic inertia and risk aversion. Transformational Leadership Theory underscores the need for visionary leadership to inspire change, which is absent in LGAs where leaders remain cautious and reactive. Contingency Theory further explains that leaders’ risk-averse strategies are shaped by external regulatory

pressures, making resistance to change a rational but ultimately limiting response. Together, these insights suggest that LGAs are caught between external demands for competitiveness and internal cultures of rigidity, resulting in organizational stagnation. This interpretation is consistent with recent scholarship highlighting that municipal leadership struggles to embrace transformation due to entrenched bureaucratic practices and punitive regulatory environments (UNDP, 2024; Shava&Muringa, 2024).

Theme: 4 Potential Pathways of Zanzibar Local Government Authorities

Table 4 Show the Potential Pathways variables of Zanzibar LGAs

Variable	Strong Agreed	Agreed	Not Agreed	Mean	Std. Dev
Communication Channels of LGAs	84(40.0)	84(40.0)	42(20.0)	2.20	0.76
Competitive Landscape of LGAs	53(25.2)	105(50.0)	52(24.8)	2.00	0.78
Employee Engagement and Willing on LGA	57(27.1)	87(41.4)	66(31.4)	1.96	0.80
Leader’s Innovation and Creativity	58(27.6)	93(44.3)	59(28.1)	1.99	0.79
Leadership Mind-set of LGAs	67(31.9)	73(34.8)	70(33.3)	1.98	0.82
Training, Learning and Development of LGA	57(27.1)	100(47.6)	53(25.2)	2.02	0.74
Measurement and Evaluation LGAs Goals	39(18.6)	94(44.8)	77(36.7)	1.82	0.78
Organization Culture& Bureaucratic Structure	57(27.1)	71(33.8)	82(39.0)	1.88	0.83
Regulatory Environment of LGAs	63(30.0)	76(36.2)	71(33.8)	1.96	0.81
Resource Allocation of LGAs	58(27.6)	90(42.9)	62(29.5)	1.98	0.81
Risk Aversion and Decision Making of LGAs	58(27.6)	82(39.0)	70(33.3)	1.94	0.82
Resistance to Change on the LGAs Staff	67(31.9)	77(36.7)	66(31.4)	2.01	0.81
Dynamic and Flexible LGAs Goals	66(31.4)	74(35.2)	70(33.3)	1.98	0.82
Uncertainty and Volatility Ability	69(32.9)	72(34.3)	69(32.9)	2.00	0.82
Existing Reward and Recognition System	67(31.9)	85(40.5)	57(27.1)	2.05	0.79
External Economic Factors	68(32.4)	85(40.5)	57(27.1)	2.05	0.79
Socio-Political and Central Authority Interfere	73(34.8)	69(32.9)	68(32.4)	2.02	0.82

Source:Field Data, (2024)

The findings in Table 4 highlight both opportunities and constraints for reform within Zanzibar LGAs. Communication channels remain problematic, with a mean score of 2.20 (SD=0.76), indicating widespread agreement (80 percent) that they are ineffective. Training and development are moderately recognized (mean=2.02, SD=0.74), yet measurement and evaluation of goals remain weak, with the lowest mean score of 1.82 (SD=0.78) and 36.7 percent disagreement.

External economic factors such as recessions and market downturns are acknowledged by 72.9 percent of respondents, with a mean of 2.05 (SD=0.79), while socio-political interference is reported by 67.7 percent (mean=2.02, SD=0.82). Reward and recognition systems are also weak, with 27.1 percent disagreement and a mean of 2.05 (SD=0.79), suggesting limited incentives for performance.

Competitive pressures are recognized (mean=2.00, SD=0.78), yet internal rigidity persists. Risk aversion (mean=1.94, SD=0.82) and bureaucratic organizational culture (mean=1.88, SD=0.83) continue to obstruct adaptive governance.

Leadership mindset (mean=1.98, SD=0.82) remains divided, with one-third of respondents disagreeing, reflecting inconsistency in managerial approaches.

These figures suggest that while pathways for reform exist, through training, recognition systems, and responsiveness to external pressures, they are obstructed by external volatility and weak internal incentive structures. The relatively low mean scores across measurement, culture, and risk aversion highlight systemic barriers that prevent LGAs from translating opportunities into effective reforms.

This interpretation reflects broader findings that African local governments often face dual challenges of institutional rigidity and external shocks, which undermine their ability to adapt and innovate (UNDP, 2024; African Peer Review Mechanism, 2023).

Interviews with Human Resource Officers from the Central and Wete Municipalities reinforced the quantitative findings by highlighting how socio-political interference undermines autonomy in local governance. One Human Resource Officer explained,

“Decisions are often reversed by central authorities, which undermines the autonomy of local government leaders. This constant interference creates uncertainty and discourages innovation, leaving officials hesitant to commit to long-term strategies. As a result, planning loses its purpose and becomes a symbolic exercise rather than a meaningful tool for guiding development.”

Community leaders across the six selected authorities added that weak reward systems fail to motivate staff. One Community leader remarked,

“Recognition within our LGAs is rare, leaving many officials feeling undervalued for their contributions. Promotions are often determined more by political connections than by actual performance or merit. This practice undermines motivation and discourages innovation, as hardworking officials see little reward for their efforts. Ultimately, the lack of merit-based recognition weakens institutional effectiveness and perpetuates a culture of favoritism rather than professionalism.”

Employees also expressed frustration that external economic volatility, such as recessions, directly affects resource allocation and service delivery, further constraining reform efforts. These qualitative insights demonstrate that potential pathways for reform are limited not only by internal bureaucratic structures but also by external political and economic pressures. Recent scholarship confirms that without addressing socio-political interference and weak incentive systems, reforms in local government remain superficial (Shava&Muringa, 2024; OECD, 2023).

From a theoretical perspective, Transformational Leadership Theory underscores the importance of recognition systems in motivating change, which are currently weak within LGAs. Entrepreneurial Theory highlights the need for resilience against external shocks, yet socio-political interference and economic volatility undermine adaptive strategies. Contingency Theory explains leaders' cautious approaches as rational responses to uncertain environments, but this risk aversion limits innovation and reform. Together, these insights suggest that potential pathways for LGAs require both structural reforms and cultural shifts, with leadership practices moving beyond bureaucratic survival toward visionary and adaptive governance. This interpretation aligns with recent scholarly work that emphasizes on sustainable reform in African local governments depends on reducing political interference and strengthening institutional resilience (UNDP, 2024; African Peer Review Mechanism, 2023).

Pathways Based on Empirical Evidence

Governance reform in Zanzibar's LGAs must be firmly anchored in empirical evidence, which reveals persistent structural and behavioral barriers including bureaucratic rigidity, ineffective training systems, resistance to change, socio-political interference, and weak recognition mechanisms. Addressing these challenges requires targeted, evidence-based pathways that translate research findings into practical institutional reforms.

1. **Rigid Bureaucratic Structures that Stifle Innovation:** Findings show that 61% of respondents perceive organizational culture as overly bureaucratic, while focus group participants described communication as largely "top-down and one-directional." Such rigidity limits innovation and delays service delivery. An evidence-based pathway involves piloting regulatory sandboxes within selected LGAs, granting temporary flexibility from specific regulations to test innovative service delivery approaches while maintaining accountability safeguards.
2. **Training Without Measurable Impact:** Although 74.7% of respondents confirmed that training is provided, 36.7% questioned the effectiveness of evaluation systems, and key informants observed that workshops rarely influence decision-making practices. This gap suggests that training remains compliance-driven rather than performance-oriented. Establishing robust performance evaluation frameworks that link training outcomes to measurable innovation and service delivery indicators would ensure that capacity-building efforts translate into tangible improvements.
3. **Resistance to Change and Risk Aversion:** With 66.6% agreeing that risk aversion is high, and interviews revealing that "failure is punished rather than learned from," it is evident that regulatory oversight reinforces cautious leadership behavior. Introducing adaptive leadership development programs

- combined with reforms that reduce punitive oversight, can foster a culture of experimentation, learning, and responsible risk-taking.
4. **Socio-Political Interference and Weak Autonomy:** Approximately 67.7% of respondents reported interference from central authorities, with decisions often reversed at higher levels. Strengthening decentralization policies and clarifying institutional mandates would protect LGAs' decision-making autonomy and ensure reforms are sustained without political disruption.
 5. **Weak Reward and Recognition Systems:** Evidence further indicates motivational challenges, with 27.1% disagreed that recognition systems exist and participants noting that promotions are often politically influenced. Developing transparent, performance-based reward and recognition frameworks would enhance staff motivation, accountability and innovation.

Theoretical Implications

These pathways reinforce Transformational Leadership Theory by emphasizing vision, recognition, and motivation as drivers of reform. They operationalize Entrepreneurial Theory through the creation of institutional spaces for innovation, such as regulatory sandboxes. Moreover, they validate Contingency Theory by demonstrating that leadership behavior is shaped by contextual pressures, which can be mitigated through adaptive structural reforms. Collectively, the integration of these theories signals a necessary shift from bureaucratic survival toward adaptive and resilient governance.

Policy Implications

Policy reforms must be context-sensitive and grounded in empirical findings. Streamlining bureaucracy through regulatory experimentation, strengthening performance-based evaluation systems, promoting adaptive leadership, safeguarding decentralization, and institutionalizing transparent reward mechanisms are critical steps. When implemented cohesively, these reforms provide a realistic and evidence-driven roadmap for transforming Zanzibar's LGAs into innovative, accountable, and resilient institutions capable of delivering effective governance.

Matrix: Challenges, Evidence, and Pathways for Zanzibar LGAs

Challenge	Evidence (Quantitative + Qualitative)	Evidence-Based Pathway
Rigid bureaucratic structures stifle innovation	61% agreed organizational culture is overly bureaucratic; focus group participants described communication as "top-down and one-directional."	Implement pilot regulatory sandboxes in select LGAs, granting temporary autonomy from specific regulations to test new service delivery methods
Training exists but fails to produce	74.7% agreed training is provided, yet 36.7% disagreed evaluation systems are	Establish performance evaluation frameworks linking

measurable outcomes	effective; interviewees noted workshops “don’t change how decisions are made.”	training outcomes to innovation and leadership metrics
Resistance to change reinforced by regulatory oversight	66.6% agreed risk aversion is high; interviews revealed leaders avoid new approaches because “failure is punished rather than learned from.”	Introduce adaptive leadership programs that encourage experimentation and learning from failure, supported by reforms to reduce punitive oversight
Socio-political interference undermines autonomy	67.7% reported interference from central authorities; respondents noted, “Decisions are often reversed by central authorities.”	Strengthen decentralization policies and clarify mandates to protect LGAs’ decision-making autonomy
Weak reward and recognition systems demotivate staff	27.1% disagreed recognition systems exist; focus groups noted promotions are “based more on politics than performance.”	Develop transparent reward and recognition frameworks tied to measurable performance outcomes
External economic volatility affects service delivery	72.9% acknowledged recessions and downturns as constraints; interviews highlighted resource allocation challenges during crises	Build resilience strategies (e.g., contingency funds, flexible budgeting) to buffer LGAs against external shocks

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The conclusion of this study underscores that Zanzibar’s Local Government Authorities (LGAs) are constrained by entrenched bureaucratic structures, inadequate training outcomes, resistance to change, and external socio-political and economic pressures. The most important finding is that while Entrepreneurial Leadership Strategies (ELs) hold significant potential to improve service delivery, their application is undermined by rigid organizational cultures, risk-averse leadership, and weak institutional support systems. By integrating quantitative evidence with qualitative insights, the study demonstrates that leadership effectiveness in LGAs is shaped not only by internal managerial practices but also by contextual factors such as regulatory oversight and political interference.

The study contributes to theory by refining the understanding of ELs in developing governance contexts. Entrepreneurial Leadership Theory is shown to be insufficient on its own unless complemented by Transformational Leadership mechanisms that motivate and engage employees, and by Contingency Theory, which explains how bureaucratic and political environments constrain leadership agency. This integrated framework advances public leadership scholarship by demonstrating how entrepreneurial, transformational, and contextual dimensions interact in small island governance systems. In practice, the study offers evidence-based pathways, such as regulatory sandboxes, performance evaluation frameworks, adaptive leadership programs, decentralization policies, and

transparent reward systems that can strengthen leadership effectiveness and institutional resilience in Zanzibar's LGAs. These recommendations move beyond generic "good governance" prescriptions by directly linking solutions to the specific challenges identified in the data.

However, the study has limitations. The quantitative sample size, while adequate for statistical analysis, may not fully capture the diversity of perspectives across all LGAs, and the cross-sectional design restricts the ability to assess changes over time. The reliance on self-reported data also introduces potential biases. Future research should employ longitudinal designs to track the evolution of ELSs in LGAs, expand sampling to include more diverse stakeholder groups, and explore comparative analyses with other small island or developing governance systems. Such studies would deepen understanding of how entrepreneurial leadership can be institutionalized in contexts marked by bureaucratic inertia and political complexity, thereby strengthening both theoretical development and practical application in public administration.

Based on the study's conclusions, several strategic recommendations are advanced. First, capacity building should be prioritized through continuous training programs that equip officials with entrepreneurial and adaptive leadership skills. Second, decentralization of decision-making must be strengthened to empower local leaders to respond swiftly to emerging challenges and community priorities. Third, cultural transformation within LGAs should be pursued by promoting openness, collaboration, and risk-taking to encourage innovation. Lastly, public-private partnerships (PPPs) should be expanded to leverage resources, technical expertise, and innovative solutions from the private sector, thereby enhancing efficiency, modernizing service delivery, and stimulating sustainable socio-economic development. Collectively, these strategies provide a roadmap for embedding entrepreneurial leadership within Zanzibar's governance system, positioning LGAs as agile, citizen-centered institutions capable of meeting contemporary development demands.

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