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Leaders' Awareness of the Ethics Code and Good Governance in Kinondoni Municipality, Tanzania.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the persistent occurrence of leadership scandals, such as corruption and fraud, within local government authorities in Tanzania, despite the establishment of the Public Leadership Code of Ethics Act No. 13 of 1995. The research sought to examine the awareness of this code among both leaders and ordinary citizens, and its interrelationship with promoting good governance. Conducted in Kinondoni Municipality, the qualitative study engaged 85 participants selected through convenient and purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected using interviews, focus group discussions, and document review, and were subsequently analyzed through thematic analysis. The findings revealed a notably high level of awareness among participants concerning the provisions of the leadership code of ethics and the principles of good governance. The study's central conclusion is that the ongoing ethical failures are not due to an absence of regulations or a lack of awareness of them. Instead, the problem is fundamentally a lack of moral will—or internal intrinsic motivation—among public leaders to implement and adhere to established ethical standards. This indicates a critical dichotomy between theoretical awareness and practical willingness to act ethically. Consequently, the study recommends that the government collaborate with relevant stakeholders to initiate reforms addressing this inadequacy in social and administrative ethics. It further suggests that foundational moral education within families and religious institutions is essential to develop the conscience required for public officials to act rightly for the welfare of society.

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BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The challenge of ethical conduct is a perennial and global issue that permeates various spheres of governance. Its origins trace back to ancient ethics, which sought to shape human behaviour for harmonious communal life by establishing obligatory rules for society. As Aristotle et al. (2014) contend, rational human beings can learn and acquire ethics from society to ensure its harmony and well-being. The extant literature reveals two predominant scholarly streams regarding the efficacy of leadership codes of ethics. The first stream, advocating an “Opportunism Constraining” view (e.g., Doung et al., 2020; Makayasa et al., 2020; Roque et al., 2020; Sudrajat, 2023; Rawat, 2024), posits that a code of ethics is an effective instrument for fostering ethical leadership. Their research attests that such codes reduce managerial opportunism, fraud, and corruption while enhancing organizational performance, leader commitment, and moral empowerment to promote good governance.

Contrary to this, a second stream of scholars subscribes to a “Window Dressing” theory (e.g., Adelstein and Clegg, 2016; Pappa et al., 2023; Ambrozy, 2023). This perspective argues that codes of ethics have no positive impact on organizations, asserting no discernible relationship between such codes and commitment, performance, or good governance. These scholars further contend that codes can endanger organizations and stifle employees' moral intuition. Supporting this critical view, Transparency International (2023) identified a weak link between prescribed ethical codes and individual character, suggesting that codes alone do not guarantee employee adherence. This study aligns with the “Opportunism Constraining” view, which affirms the positive impact of a leadership code of ethics in promoting good governance. This position is supported by several arguments. Firstly, it is nearly impossible to conceive of an organization or society functioning without ideal moral principles to shape, guide, and harmonize public behaviour. This is not to claim that a code of ethics eliminates immoral behaviour entirely, but rather that it promotes ethical leadership committed to good governance and quality public service (Ayibam, 2024a; Ayibam, 2024b; Ayibam, 2025a; Ayibam, 2025b).

The researcher disputes the “Window Dressing” theory, which denies any positive organizational impact. The central argument here is that the problem lies not in the inherent ineffectiveness of the code itself, but in its implementation. Two critical aspects underpin this implementation gap: the robustness of supervisory bodies and enforcement procedures, and the development of an internal moral will among leaders. Within the African context, elements of good character and the common good are central to ethics, emphasizing societal welfare. The sense of communion, denoting togetherness and cooperation, is fundamental. As Adewale (2020:751) notes, African society operates under the Ubuntu philosophy, which implies “humanity” and is often translated as “I am because we are.” Like ancient ethics, African ethics guides individuals toward improving the quality of societal well-being.

In Tanzania, the importance of a code of ethics is constitutionally enshrined. Article 132(1) of the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania, 1977, establishes ethical integrity as a key qualification for public leadership. Consequently, the Public Leadership Code of Ethics Act No. 13 of 1995 [CAP. 398 R.E. 2020] was introduced to guide public leaders away from unethical behaviour and to promote ethical conduct in the execution of their duties. The Act defines a “public leader” broadly to include officials across the executive, legislature, judiciary, police, military, and local government, mandating them

to act with honesty, compassion, and sobriety, and to uphold the highest ethical standards to conserve public confidence in government.

However, despite this robust framework, literature and government reports (e.g., Lameck, 2022; Ackim et al., 2023; TI, 2023; URT, 2023; Muchunguzi, 2023; BTI, 2024; Mtasigazyza, 2024) frequently document leadership scandals involving corruption and fraud within local government authorities (LGAs). This persistent incongruity prompted the present study to investigate leaders' awareness of the Public Leadership Code of Ethics and its role in promoting good governance within the Kinondoni Municipality, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

RESEARCH GAP

This study distinguishes itself from the existing literature contextually, methodologically, and theoretically. Previous studies, such as Lameck's (2022) comparative case study in Morogoro Municipality and Hai District, effectively demonstrated the compromised state of ethical leadership. Muchunguzi's (2023) systematic literature review focused on the interrelationships between ethical leadership and public resource management. The Afrobarometer survey (2023) quantified the persistent levels of corruption in public institutions, and Mtasigazyza's (2024) mixed-methods study examined ethics management in public service institutions, including Kinondoni Municipality.

However, a predominant focus of these cited studies has been on documenting the existence and extent of unethical tendencies among public servants. While valuable, this focus is insufficient for establishing why unethical behaviour persists *despite* the established legal framework of the Public Leadership Code of Ethics Act of 1995. As Ambrozy (2023:5) notes, "the worst possible situation is a violation of the code of ethics by one person, especially if he does not have the proper ethical education." This gap necessitates an in-depth investigation into the underlying reasons for this persistence, specifically by probing the awareness levels of both leaders and citizens.

Furthermore, most studies conducted in Tanzania, including those by Lameck (2022), Ackim et al. (2023), and Mtasigazyza (2024), focused on the Code of Ethics and Conduct for Public Servants of 2005. In contrast, this study explicitly addresses the Public Leadership Code of Ethics of 1995 [Cap 398 RE 2020], which governs a distinct, leadership-tier cohort.

Moreover, despite common agreement on the significance of leadership ethics, Mtasigazyza (2024:19) found that research in East African countries focuses predominantly on the private sector, leaving a significant lacuna in public sector studies. This neglect is particularly acute at the local government level. As evidenced by the BTI report (2024:7) and URT (2022:144,159), no specific study within public administration literature has focused on the Public Leadership Code of Ethics in promoting good governance within LGAs in Kinondoni Municipality.

Methodologically, this study addresses a gap by employing a qualitative approach. Unlike the quantitative or mixed-methods designs prevalent in existing research on leadership codes, a qualitative methodology is best suited for exploring the nuanced perceptions, awareness, and underlying reasons behind ethical (or unethical) behaviour in a specific context. It was against this backdrop that this study was conducted to fill these identified contextual, methodological, and thematic knowledge gaps.

RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY: INTERPRETIVIST EPISTEMOLOGY

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018:40), a research philosophy guides the researcher's decisions regarding methodology, data collection, analysis, and interpretation. For this study, an interpretivist epistemology was adopted. This choice is appropriate given the nature of the inquiry, which involves engaging with participants in their natural setting—the specific context of Kinondoni Municipality. Interpretivism views reality as relative and socially constructed through interactions between the researcher and the participants. This philosophy is therefore well-suited to exploring the subjective meanings, awareness, and lived experiences of leaders and citizens regarding the code of ethics and good governance.

RESEARCH APPROACH

This study adopted a qualitative research approach to investigate leaders' and citizens' awareness of the Public Leadership Code of Ethics and its role in promoting good governance in Local Government Authorities (LGAs). As Saunders et al. (2016:168) suggest, a qualitative approach is intrinsically associated with an interpretive philosophy in its scope and objectives. The selection of this approach was guided by two primary reasons. First, consistent with Gautney and Peach (2016:57), a qualitative methodology is appropriate where there is little prior knowledge about the specific study area within the chosen context. Second, the philosophical worldview of this study—an interpretivist epistemology—necessitates the collection of rich, qualitative information. This aligns with a constructivist ontology and an epistemology based on interpretivism, which together seek to understand the socially constructed meanings and experiences of the participants.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Following Creswell and Creswell (2018:49), a research design provides a specific direction for procedural decisions within a study. For this inquiry, a case study design was employed. Yin (2014, as cited in Creswell & Creswell, 2018:50-51) defines a case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. This design is bound by time and activity, and researchers gather detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures, making it ideal for an in-depth exploration of a single, complex case.

RESEARCH AREA

The investigation into leaders' and citizens' awareness of the Public Leadership Code of Ethics was conducted in the Dar es Salaam Region, specifically within the Kinondoni Municipal Council. Kinondoni was purposively selected as a representative case study for two principal reasons. First, it is a local government authority where public leaders can be directly assessed regarding their awareness of the code and their role in promoting good governance. Second, and more significantly, the Kinondoni Municipality has been frequently cited in Controller and Auditor General (CAG) audit reports (URT, 2022:159; 2023:47) as an entity grappling with instances of unethical behaviour among its public leaders, thus presenting a critical case for study.

According to the 2022 population census (URT, 2022:84), Kinondoni has a total population of 982,328. The researcher anticipated that this large, diverse urban population would yield rich information, as the municipality is a hub for workers,

commerce, education, and administrative activities, attracting people from all corners of the country.

Geographically, Kinondoni Municipality is situated in an urban setting approximately 9 kilometres from the Dar es Salaam city centre. Demographically, the population is highly heterogeneous, characterized by ethnic, religious, and professional diversity. The majority of residents are either Christian or Muslim and are employed in various sectors, including business, formal employment, and labour. Administratively, the Kinondoni Municipal Council is currently divided into 20 wards and 112 streets. For the purposes of this study, the focus was on the municipality's core areas, which include the wards of Kinondoni, Magomeni, Kigogo, Tandale, Mikocheni, Kijitonyama, Bunju, Kunduchi, Wazo, and Makumbusho (see Map 1.1).

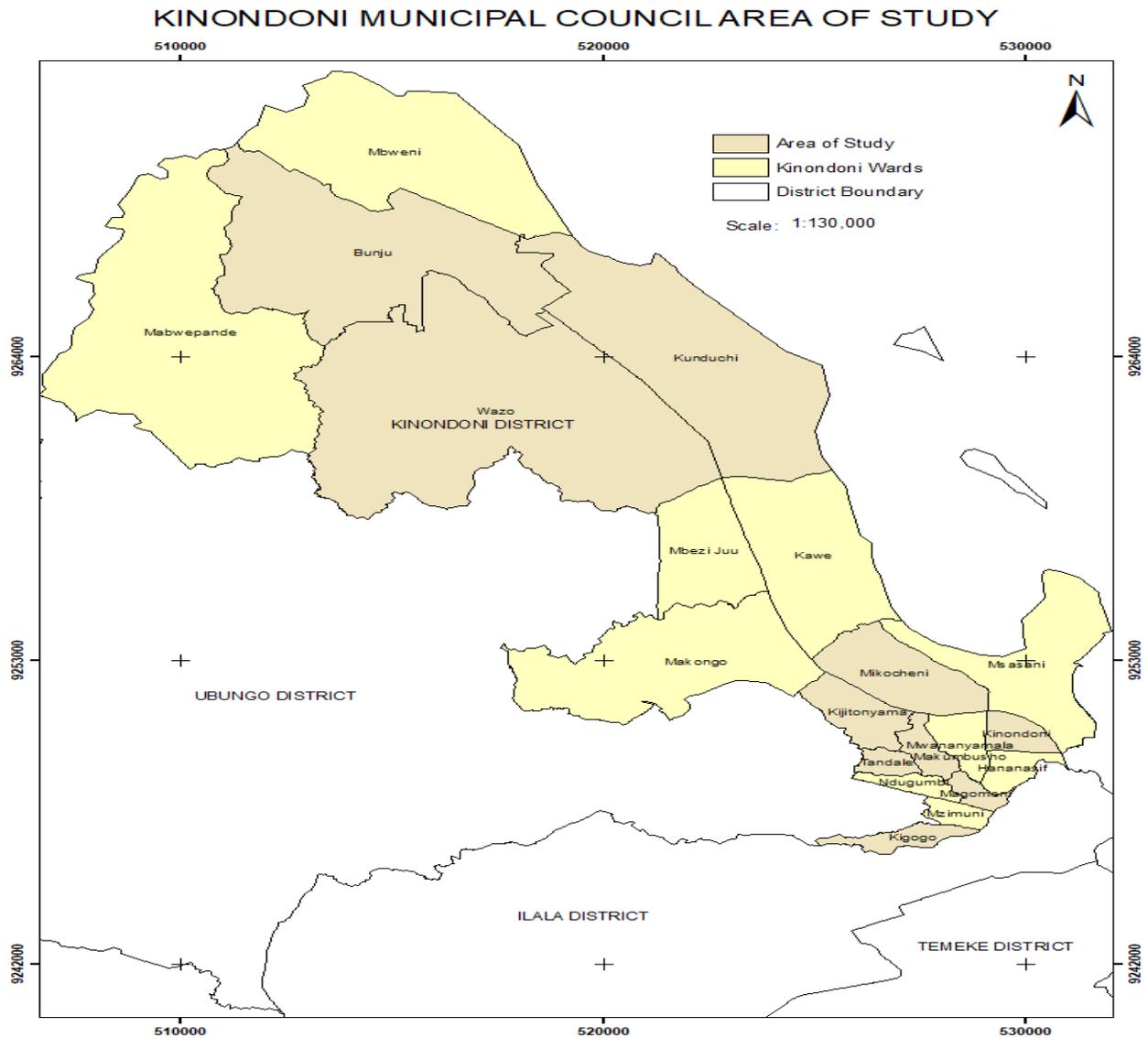


Figure 1.1: A map of Kinondoni Municipal Council

Source: Kinondoni Municipal Council.

PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

The study used 85 participants; thirty-three (33) local government leaders serving in different capacities were purposefully selected, three (3) retirees from public administration who were conveniently selected, six (6) religious leaders from Moslem and Christian communities who were purposefully selected, and forty-three (43) citizens were conveniently selected from Kinondoni Municipality. This gave a total of eighty-five (85) key informant interviewees as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Participants of the Study

S/N	Participants	Sample	Methods
1	Local government officials	33	Interview
2	Public Administration retirees	3	Interview
3	Religious leaders	6	Interview
4	Ordinary citizens	13	Interview
	Other citizens	30	FGDs
Total		85	

METHODS FOR DATA COLLECTION

This study was qualitative in nature and collected data through document review, interview, and focus group discussion (FGD). Yin (2014) recommends for the use of multiple methods for data collection to achieve dependability and credibility of the study findings.

DATA ANALYSIS

This qualitative data analysis adopted the inductive style, i.e., from specific (subjective) to general (objective), because the research philosophy of this study was based on interpretivist epistemology in which this qualitative research was socially constructed from individual opinions and experiences. In line with Creswell and Creswell (2018:269), a descriptive approach was adopted for the interpretation of data because the qualitative study is descriptive, which reports detailed information about participants, events, and places in the form of words and pictures rather than numbers. Also, the narrative passage approach was employed to convey the findings from the analysis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Leaders' Awareness of Public Leadership Code of Ethics and Good Governance in the Local Government Authorities

This was the main objective, which aimed at investigating the knowledge and awareness of leaders and citizens regarding the public leadership code of ethics, good governance, and the relationship between leadership ethics and good governance. It was necessary to investigate the respondents' awareness of these concepts. Unless both leaders and citizens are aware of the above-mentioned concepts, they may not be able to

perform their duties in a way that would promote good governance. The coming paragraph is about the public leadership code of ethics.

Public Leadership Code of Ethics: When asked, through interview, to explain what the public leadership code of ethics entails, local government leaders had varied opinions, but generally, they viewed it as ethical guidelines for public leadership. For example, one of the LG respondents at the municipal level had this to say:

“Public leadership codes of ethics are guidelines that a public leader should follow in fulfilling his or her role in providing services to the public to reduce citizens' complaints. This is why public leaders ought to fill out ethics forms” [LG leader, Kinondoni Municipality].

The above views of an LG respondent from the Municipal level were also supported by another LG respondent from the Mtaa level who responded by saying that:

“The public leadership code of ethics is the prescribed principles such as integrity, accountability, and justice that ought to be followed by public leaders in bringing positive results for people to get their needs. [Mtaa chairperson”, Makumbusho Ward].

Another respondent from the Mtaa level also had this to say:

“The public leadership code of ethics entails operational guidelines which ought to be observed by public leaders in carrying out their given responsibilities”. [Mtaa Chairperson, Bunju Ward]

The study also sought the views of public administration retirees (PA retirees) on their understanding of the public leadership code of ethics. The rationale to do so was premised on the assumption that, having worked as local government leaders in public office, they were likely to have accumulated extensive knowledge and a wide range of experience on matters of public administration, particularly on leadership code of ethics.

During interviews with public administration retirees, they generally described the public leadership code of ethics as a code of conduct that guides public leaders in serving the people. For example, one of the respondents from PA retirees responded that:

“The Public Leadership Code of Ethics is a code of conduct stipulating that a public leader must be a person who respects the principles of work, the laws, procedures, and guidelines at the working place”. [PA retiree, Kinondoni Municipality].

Another respondent from the ward level also had this to say:

“The Public Leadership Code of Ethics is a guide that requires a public leader to live and act according to the rules of leadership in serving the relevant community instead of only caring about his/her interests” [PA retiree, Magomeni Ward].

The above response concurs with the ancient ethics as advocated by Aristotle, Plato and Socrates that the code of ethics shapes a leader's behaviour concerning the community. It implies a sense of caring for others rather than merely caring about personal interests. It is important to note here that most of the corrupt conduct among public leaders today comes from unethical leadership due to their selfishness.

Also, the study sought to investigate religious leaders' understanding regarding the meaning of public leadership code of ethics because religious leaders are key stakeholders of integrity and moral authority in the society. Participants from Christian and Moslem communities were selected because the majority of the citizens in Kinondoni Municipality

are Christians and Moslems that helps to gather rich information. The understanding by respondents from the LG leaders' category at all levels is shared by the respondents from religious leaders who responded through interviews, indicating that the public leadership code of ethics entails moral principles that guide public leaders in carrying out their duties. For example, one of the interviewed religious leaders said that the leadership code of ethics entails the following: *"The principles that guide public leaders on what to do and what not to do in the roles entrusted to them by the government to serve the people"*. [A religious leader, Kinondoni Ward].

The views, through interviews, by respondents from LG leaders' category at all levels, PA retirees and religious leaders revealed that LG leaders are aware of the meaning of public leadership code of ethics, particularly on the role it plays as the moral campus for leaders to ensure good governance. Although LG leaders were able to define the leadership code of ethics, showing how it is connected with good governance whereby the former entails the guidelines/principles for realising the latter. They slightly differed from religious leaders in the area of emphasis. While most of the LG leaders considered the code of ethics as guidelines/principles for leaders to follow in executing their duties, religious leaders mainly focused on the behaviour of leaders.

Although the difference might appear trivial, practically, it is not. This is because the Public Leadership Code of Ethics Act Cap 398 prescribes the *Dos* and *don'ts* (principles) to be followed by public leaders and the behaviour (which may be intrinsic values). For example, section 6 (a) of the Public Leadership Code of Ethics Act Cap 398 states that: "Public leaders should uphold the highest ethical standards that are to act with honesty, compassion, sobriety, continence and temperance so that public confidence and trust in the integrity, objectivity and impartiality of the government are conserved and enhanced". Apart from prescribing for leaders to uphold ethical standards such as, honest, compassion, sobriety and integrity the Act also prescribes for public leaders to follow principles in executing their duties as it states in section 6 (c) that: "Public leaders must fulfil their official duties by upholding the rule of law, public interest and give due regard to merits of each case when making decision".

It was also significant to solicit views from citizens on what they understood by the public leadership code of ethics. Citizens are important stakeholders in LGAs since they are beneficiaries of the provision of public service. When asked, through FGD, to explain what the public leadership code of ethics entails, the sampled citizens had varied opinions, though they generally viewed it as guidelines and standards for public leadership at the working place. One respondent through FGD described the term public leadership code of ethics as: *"Guidelines and regulations are set for a leader to follow"* [Citizen, Bunju Beach Mtaa].

Participants from the citizen category seem to understand the meaning of public leadership code of ethics not only on its positive contribution to good governance but also its negative implications when it is lacking in public leadership as one of the respondents reveal:

"The public leadership code of ethics entails principles that a leader must follow to have ethical values to lead people. If a leader is not ethical, the organisation or institution under such leadership will be unethical, too". [Citizen, Wazo Ward].

As the responses from the above participants show, the public leadership code of ethics is the determinant of good or bad leadership. This means a public leader who does not observe a leadership code of ethics cannot be a good leader. Therefore, the public leadership code of ethics shapes and guides public leaders in executing their public duties for the well-being of the organisation or society.

The respondents are aware that public codes of ethics guide the actions of public leaders. This implies that citizens know what leaders should do. If citizens know what is expected of their leaders, then it logically follows that they can assess the quality of leadership offered by their public leaders. Under this circumstance, one may expect accountability of leaders to those they lead, hence good governance.

Generally, the findings reveal that the understanding by many respondents regarding the public leadership code of ethics is in line with the Public Leadership Code of Ethics Act, URT (2020), which prescribes for the observance of the code of ethics by public leaders. Moreover, their understanding of the leadership code of ethics is also enshrined in the Constitution, whereby Article 132 (1) of The Constitution of Tanzania, 1977, provides for ethical integrity as a qualification for public leadership.

The finding agrees with other scholars. The first stream of scholars believes in the “Opportunism Constraining” view; such scholars include (Doung *et al.*, 2020; Roque *et al.*, 2020; Deciu, 2022; Jannat *et al.*, 2022; Jensen *et al.*, 2023; Kim, 2023; Nguyen *et al.*, 2023). These scholars found that the code of ethics is an effective instrument for ethical leadership to reduce managerial opportunism, fraud and corruption and to promote effective performance in organisation. However, the finding disagrees with other previous studies conducted by other scholars. The second stream of scholars believes in a theory known as “Window Dressing”, these include (Adelstein and Clegg, 2016; Ambrozy, 2023; Pappa *et al.*, 2023). These argue that the code of ethics has no positive impact on organisations. Further, they argue that the code of ethics endangers the organisation and denies the employee moral intuition.

Reflecting on the above findings, the researcher thinks that our society needs a code of ethics to shape and guide public leadership for the well-being of the society at large. A code of ethics alone cannot manage to solve all problems at 100%, but it has a vital role to play. On the other hand, personal moral intuition should be respected, but it should also be guided by the code of ethics so that personal interest cannot override the public interest. The following paragraph is about good governance.

Good Governance: The question sought to establish the understanding of both local government leaders and citizens regarding good governance. This question was prompted by the fact that unless stakeholders are aware of what good governance entails, they may not rightly describe the existence or lack of existence of good governance among the leaders under investigation. Recognising this fact, the conceptual question sought to establish good governance as perceived by stakeholders.

In an interview session with LG, leaders gave varied views but generally viewed good governance as rules by which citizens get access to quality social services. It implies that good governance is that which brings development for its citizens. One respondent among LG leaders opined that:

“...good governance is that which follows principles and guidelines to respond to the problems of the people, for instance water, education, health services, and infrastructure’ [LG leader, Kinondoni Municipality].

Another respondent among LG leaders pointed out that: *“Good governance means that every citizen would be free to work, comment, and criticize the government; and to be orderly so that no one is harassed, and without misuse of the law”* [WEO, Kinondoni Municipality]

Another respondent among LG leaders added this: *“Good governance consists of freedom and the rule of law for the well-being of the people”*. [Councillor, Kinondoni Municipality].

According to this expectation, citizens' freedom is an essential factor determining the extent to which good governance exists. Freedom under the guidance of the law is important in allowing citizens' participation in development planning and decision-making.

Public administration retirees were also asked to respond on what they understood about good governance. Generally, they described good governance as allowing participation, hailing teamwork, valuing listening and responsively answering the problems of citizens promptly, and providing public service efficiently. This implies that good governance should be accountable to the real needs of their people, and the government should be ready to face criticism on the weaknesses in governance to improve the wellbeing of its people. It also implies that whenever there is equal participation in all spheres of life, for example, socio-economic and political spheres, both leaders and followers can plan, discuss, and make decisions while addressing the real needs of the public. It further indicates that the well-being of the people is a good measure of good governance.

Further, religious leaders were asked to give their views, through interview, on what they understood by the term 'good governance'. Just as LG leaders and PA retirees opined, good governance solves the problems of citizens in ensuring the provision of social services such as water, health, education, and good roads. Therefore, good governance is the ability to provide social services for the wellbeing of the people, as one of the respondents substantiated: *“Good governance is that type of governance in which all necessary social needs for all people are attained on time”*. [A Religious leader, Kigogo Ward].

Through FGDs, respondents were asked to give their views on what good governance entails. They responded by indicating that good governance entails listening to citizens' problems and solving them timely and facilitating access to social services such as water, medicine, education, affordable food and good roads as it was indicated by one of the respondents from the citizen category: *“Good governance provides or enables people to meet their needs”*. [Citizen, Tegeta Mtaa].

Another respondent among the citizen category pointed out that: *“Good governance is that which helps citizens to have their daily necessary human needs in time and at the closest, be it directly or indirectly”*. [Citizen, Magomeni Ward]. Generally, the findings from LG leaders, PA retirees, religious through interview and citizen respondents through FGD show that the concept of good governance is understood as an important aspect in local governance for ensuring the timely and quality provision of social services, listening to the citizens, promotion of equal participation and freedom (democracy), and observing the rule of law. That is to say, when public leaders exercise good governance, citizens'

physical, social, and economic needs can be realized.

The study's finding on good governance is supported by the principles of good governance as defined by UNESCO (n.d), which includes but is not limited to accountability, responsiveness, freedom, and rule of law. It is also in agreement with Griddle (2017), who relates good governance with the way political and administrative decisions get made, how governmental systems work, and how states relate to societies. As identified by all respondents, good governance is the means towards people's development since it guides public leaders to efficiently and effectively manage resources for the public good as observed by UNDP (2007:128), that it is "...the process by which public institutions conduct public affairs and manage public resources".

When participants were asked to say whether good governance exists or not, 79 of them (92.9%) said that it does not exist because of corruption. Their answer agreed with previous studies, as supported by (BTI, 2024; Ikeke, 2024; Masenya, 2024; Mtasigazya, 2024 and Rawat, 2024), that the performance of governance is highly deficient due to the embezzlement of public funds, political interference, and corruption. However, few participants (6, 7.1%) said that good governance exists.

The researcher's reflection on the findings as regards what is good governance, he defines good governance as follows: good governance listens, provides and enables necessary and standard social needs be attained on time and at closest for all people. Indeed, bad governance can be described as that which fails to provide or facilitate socio-economic and political service delivery. The next paragraph is the code of ethics on promoting good governance.

Relationship of Public Leadership Code of Ethics and Good Governance: All the respondents, 85 (100%), agreed that leadership ethics is the foundation of good governance. They opined that leaders who perform their duties according to the code of ethics by adhering to strict ethical principles such as integrity, honesty, the rule of law, accountability, and responsibility become effective and efficient in providing social services to all citizens in a timely and reachable manner. Further, as far as the process of governance is operated by people, there should be a leadership code of ethics that guides and promotes the welfare of all citizens. For example, during an interview with LG leaders, one of the respondents emphasized that:

"Leadership ethics and good governance are very much just as oxygen and human beings. If a human being lacks oxygen, he/she dies, and when governance lacks leadership ethics, it becomes bad governance because it will fail to meet the necessary needs of its citizens". [WEO, Kinondoni Municipality].

The above views by the respondents imply that both leadership ethics and good governance focus on the achievement of effective service delivery to the community. Also, it is indicative of leaders with ethical integrity who can promote good governance. From this point of view, good governance ensures good practical results since it enhances rationality, morality, and goodwill among public leaders as they observe acceptable principles. On the contrary, unethical leadership causes poor performance that leads to poor and untimely service delivery, hence bad governance, as one of the respondents from the citizen category indicated through FGD: *"Leadership ethics is the engine of good governance"*. [Citizens, Kunduchi Ward].

Similar views were given by one of the respondents from the PA retiree category who emphasized during the interview that:

“Leadership ethics and good governance relate because you cannot have good governance without ethical leaders. Integrity is number one, then you go to good governance. The quality of governance is measured by the integrity leaders have in providing necessary needs to its respective citizens on a timely manner and at the required standard”. [PA retiree, Kinondoni Municipality].

The same view was echoed by religious leaders as three of the respondents from that category responded through interview that:

“The uniqueness of leadership is connected with ethics. Government leaders can only achieve good governance with integrity. Leadership ethics show direction and provide support for government organizations to attain its goals”. [Religious leaders, Kinondoni Municipality].

Generally, the findings from respondents of all categories- LG leaders, PA retirees, religious leaders all through interview; and citizens through FGD demonstrate that leadership ethics and good governance are as important as oxygen is to human beings. When human beings lack oxygen, they die; the same applies to governance: when it is conducted while disregarding leadership ethics, it is doomed to be ineffective and inefficient and will fall short of fulfilling its roles in bringing development for the well-being of the people. It is worth noting here that, through the study findings, honesty was considered one of the key aspects of the public leadership code of ethics.

It was argued that honest leaders are likely to be hard working and accountable to the public in responding to the problems of the citizens without discrimination, and that such leaders do not engage into corruption. One of the respondents from the LG leaders' category was of the view that: *“Faithfulness in serving the public interest needs honest leaders. Honesty is the first essential of ethical leadership; other things may follow. (Mtaa chairman”*, Bunju Ward).

Many respondents from all categories pointed out that adherence to the rules of law, observing procedures of governance, and abiding by the Constitution of the country are essential values of good governance, but it needs honest leaders. Honest leaders walk their talk and properly manage public resources as well as national policies for the common interest. The findings of this study on the public leadership code of ethics in promoting good governance are supported by several studies' findings, including (Makayasa *et al.*, 2020; Roque *et al.*, 2020; Sudrajat, 2023; Rawat, 2024; Masenya; 2024). These scholars opined that a code of ethics is the absolute prerequisite and critical need for good governance to improve service delivery. Indeed, a leadership code of ethics is a catalyst for good governance. These scholars argued that without ethics, full achievement of good governance will not be possible.

Showing the effects of lack of ethical leadership, respondents through interview and FGD stated that ethical leadership is the criteria for setting apart ethical leaders from unethical leaders. The respondents also demonstrated that without ethical leadership values, 'personal will' and 'personal interest' such as favouritism, abuse of power, and injustice in the society may override public interest. Consequently, achieving good governance may turn into an unrealised dream, as one of the interviewed respondents explained:

“Values of ethical leadership such as responsiveness and rule of law are

like taboos, these are guidelines and procedures that a public leader should follow in carrying out his or her duties for the common interest rather than depending on his/her will”. [Councillor. Kinondoni, Municipality].

The study findings further revealed that ethical values ensure good governance. Ethical values help leaders do justice to the position they hold and build trust to citizens. The findings are supported by the *Public Leadership Code of Ethics Act* (2020) Section 6(a), which clearly states that ethical standards aim to build confidence and trust to the public and conserve the objectivity and impartiality of the government.

The finding from all categories of respondents, LG leaders, PA retirees, religious leaders, and citizens indicates that a code of ethics is an important ingredient to leadership in promoting the values of good governance. Also, the finding agrees with the constitution of land whereby Article 132 (5a) of the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania (URT 1977:75) prohibits the conduct and behaviour which tend to portray that a leader is dishonest or lacks integrity. It discourages corrupt practices by public officials and promotes ethical conduct. In conclusion, the quality of governance is measured by the ethical integrity of its leaders in serving the public.

Furthermore, the finding is supported by other findings conducted by other scholars, such as (Deciu, 2022; Jannat *et al.*, 2022; Srivastava and Kamalini, 2022) who found that codes of ethics and compliance programmes can reduce unethical conduct. Their studies strongly support the positive link between the code of ethics and good performance in the organisation. Their findings show that adherence to a code of ethics reduces misconduct and improves an organisation’s reputation, enhancing efficiency, reducing costs, and improving the quality of service delivery. On the reflection of the above findings, the leadership code of ethics is an inevitable tool in promoting the values of good governance. Full good governance can be achieved through public leaders with integrity. Unethical leaders cannot will to promote the values of good governance for public interest rather than their interest. Next subsection is study contribution to knowledge.

STUDY CONTRIBUTION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study has substantiated the theoretical relationship between the Public Leadership Code of Ethics and the attainment of good governance, demonstrating that ethical leadership is a critical catalyst for socio-economic and political well-being. However, it addresses a central paradox: despite the long-standing establishment of the Public Leadership Code of Ethics Act No. 13 of 1995 [Cap 398 RE 2020] and other regulatory mechanisms, unethical conduct persists among local government leaders, as corroborated by numerous studies (Lameck, 2022; Muchunguzi, 2023; BTI, 2024; Mtasigazya, 2024).

The primary knowledge contribution of this research is its identification of the root cause of this persistence. The problem is not a lack of regulations or a deficit in awareness of those regulations. Instead, the core issue is a profound **lack of moral will**—a deficiency in the internal control (intrinsic motivation) necessary for implementation. The study uncovers a critical dichotomy between *theoretical rationality* (awareness of the rules) and *practical rationality* (the willingness to act upon them). Unethical leaders appear unwilling to subordinate their personal interests to the public good. This finding echoes Rawat's (2024) assertion that “we don’t need more rules! we need to implement the ones we have, ethically.”

Consequently, the study implies that the solution lies not merely in strengthening external enforcement mechanisms but in fostering the internal moral compass of public leaders. It suggests that long-term change requires a societal project of moral formation, beginning in families with the ethical education of children and reinforced by religious and community leaders in developing a collective moral conscience. This foundational work is essential for enabling individuals to internalize societal ethical standards and act rightly for the welfare of society at large.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that respondents universally understood the Public Leadership Code of Ethics as a set of operational guidelines and a code of conduct to be observed by public leaders in the execution of their duties. Furthermore, findings confirmed that good governance is perceived as a means to improve citizen well-being by facilitating access to essential social needs—such as water, healthcare, education, affordable food, and infrastructure—in a timely, equitable, and standards-compliant manner. Respondents clearly articulated the relationship between the Code and good governance, positing that leaders who adhere to ethical principles demonstrate the integrity essential for upholding key governance values, including accountability, participation, transparency, and the rule of law.

A significant finding was the high level of awareness among both leaders and citizens regarding the Code and the principles of good governance. However, a critical practical shortcoming was identified: some local government leaders did not possess a physical copy of the Code document. This lack of an immediate reference source likely impedes consistent implementation and daily adherence.

Aligning with Kantian Rational Choice Theory, which posits that duty is defined by prescribed principles, the study concludes that the possession of the Code manual is a fundamental prerequisite. It serves as an essential tool to guide local government leaders in their daily decision-making processes, lawful duty execution, and ultimately, in the sustained promotion of good governance.

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