Navigating Supervisory Influence on Public Sector Teamwork: Insights from Morogoro Municipal Council, Tanzania

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Abstract: This study investigates the effect of supervisory relationships on enhancing employees' teamwork in the public sector, focusing on the Morogoro Municipal Council, Tanzania. It examines how supervisors influence team dynamics, support mechanisms, and collaborative efficiency among public servants. A mixed-methods approach under a pragmatist research philosophy was employed, using a convergent design. Data were collected from 172 respondents selected through probability (simple random) and non-probability (purposive) sampling. Quantitative data were gathered using structured questionnaires, while qualitative insights were obtained through interviews. The findings revealed that supervisory relationships play a pivotal role in fostering effective teamwork and service delivery. While respondents generally reported positive supervisory practices, gaps were identified in goal setting, conflict resolution, and role clarity. The study recommends capacity-building programs for supervisors, with emphasis on conflict mediation, participatory goal setting, and communication skills. Strengthening supervisory practices can improve team collaboration, service delivery, and overall organizational performance.

Keywords: Supervisory Relationships, Teamwork, Public Sector, Employee Performance, Transformational Leadership.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Supervisory relationships are vital in fostering teamwork within public sector organizations. Globally, effective supervisor–employee engagement enhances organizational performance, cooperation, and team dynamics (Haas & Mortensen, 2016; Suknunan & Bhana, 2022). In African contexts, particularly in South Africa, strong supervision has been linked to improved productivity and team cohesion (Mtembu & Bengesi, 2021), while weak supervision has been associated with poor team performance (Okpara & Wynn, 2020). In Tanzania, public sector employees often cite poor supervisory relationships as a key cause of underperformance (Liana et al., 2023; Ngoye, 2023). Although teamwork attributes such as trust, communication, and collaboration have been studied (Olego, 2018; Jesse & Bangesi, 2018), challenges such as lack of feedback, poor conflict management, and unclear roles persist. This study therefore examines the effect of supervisory relationships on enhancing employees' teamwork in the Morogoro Municipal Council. Its findings aim to contribute to strengthening supervisory frameworks in Tanzania's public sector.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The study is grounded in Transformational Leadership Theory (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985), which emphasizes intellectual stimulation, vision, and individualized support. Leaders who build strong relationships with employees inspire them to surpass expectations, create innovative work environments, and align personal and organizational goals (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Yuki, 2013). Prior research in Tanzania indicates that both transactional and transformational leadership influence employee satisfaction and teamwork (Mwakasangula & Mwita, 2021). Studies elsewhere emphasize the role of supervisor support, fairness, and attentiveness in preventing workplace conflict and fostering collaboration (Shier et al., 2021). The study conceptualizes supervisory relationships (independent variable) as practices including communication, conflict mediation, feedback, and goal setting, which directly affect employees' teamwork (dependent variable), with HR policy acting as an intervening variable.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Morogoro Municipal Council, Tanzania. A convergent mixed-methods design was adopted (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Using Yamane's formula with a 0.05 margin of error, a sample of 172 respondents was drawn from a population of 301.

- *Quantitative Data:*
  161 questionnaires distributed to staff members.

- *Qualitative Data:*
  11 interviews with heads of departments/sections.

- *Secondary Data:*
  Government reports, HR records, and prior studies.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentages, graphs, and charts), while qualitative data were analyzed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study identified seven supervisory practices: communication encouragement, feedback frequency, conflict mediation, recognition of achievements, goal setting, clarity of instructions, and inclusivity. Most employees reported positive supervisory engagement, especially in open communication (82.9%) and conflict mediation (69.9%). Key contributions included strengthened team relationships (75.6%), increased trust (58.5%), and motivation for collaboration (56.1%). However, fewer respondents (47.9%) felt adequately supported by supervisors. Employees also identified challenges including limited resources (77.2%), communication barriers (65.9%), role ambiguity (63.4%), and feedback challenges (61.8%). This hindered teamwork effectiveness despite otherwise supportive supervisory practices.

V. CONCLUSION

This study establishes that supervisory relationships are central to enhancing teamwork in Tanzania's public sector. Effective communication, feedback, conflict resolution, and goal setting significantly strengthen team cohesion and performance. Yet, gaps such as unclear roles, resource shortages, and inconsistent support undermine these gains. By situating its findings within transformational leadership theory, the study highlights the need for supervisors to inspire, mentor, and support employees to foster effective teamwork and service delivery.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Capacity-Building for Supervisors: Training in conflict resolution, participatory goal setting, and communication.
- Policy Frameworks: Establish clear HR policies for feedback, role clarity, and resource allocation.
- Employee Engagement: Institutionalize retreats, workshops, and inclusive decision-making forums.
- Public Sector Reform: Strengthen supervisory frameworks as a strategy for enhancing service delivery and organizational efficiency.

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