

Navigating the Business Environment

A Qualitative Analysis of Strategic Challenges and Governance in Tanzania, 2000–2026

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ABSTRACT

The strategic and governance landscape for enterprises in Tanzania has undergone significant transformation, influenced by evolving regulatory frameworks, market liberalisation, and regional integration. A nuanced understanding of the persistent and emergent challenges faced by business leaders is required to inform both managerial practice and policy. This study aims to identify and analyse the key strategic and corporate governance challenges perceived by senior executives operating within the Tanzanian context, and to explore the adaptive strategies they employ. A qualitative, multi-case study design was employed, utilising in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 28 chief executive officers and managing directors from a stratified sample of medium and large enterprises across four key sectors. Data were analysed using a thematic analysis framework. Analysis identified three dominant thematic challenges: regulatory unpredictability, perceived as a greater impediment than corruption by a majority of participants (approximately 60%); constrained access to long-term capital; and a acute shortage of managerial talent. Firms adopted hybrid strategies blending formal compliance with informal relational networks to navigate these obstacles. The business environment is characterised by a complex interplay of formal institutional weaknesses and resilient informal adaptation mechanisms. Strategic success is contingent on leaders' ability to manage this duality effectively. Policymakers should prioritise enhancing regulatory clarity and stability. Firms are recommended to invest in structured talent development programmes and to diversify financing strategies beyond traditional banking relationships. Strategic management, corporate governance, business environment, qualitative research, East Africa This paper provides a novel, empirically-grounded typology of adaptive strategic responses to institutional voids, offering a framework for analysing firm-level resilience in comparable emerging economies.

Keywords: Strategic management, Corporate governance, Sub-Saharan Africa, Qualitative case study, Institutional theory, Emerging markets, Tanzania

Article Highlights

- Identifies regulatory unpredictability as the foremost challenge, surpassing corruption concerns.
- Reveals a critical shortage of managerial talent constraining strategic execution.
- Documents firm adaptation through hybrid formal-informal strategic responses.
- Proposes a novel typology for analysing resilience in institutional voids.

Core Finding

Firms navigate institutional complexity by blending formal compliance with informal relational networks, creating a distinctive hybrid strategic model.

This qualitative analysis offers a granular view of executive decision-making in a dynamic African economy.

ABSTRACT-ONLY PUBLICATION

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