



Surveying the Historical Legacies: Contemporary Governance Challenges in Tanzania,

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Abstract

Background: Contemporary governance challenges in Tanzania are often examined without sufficient historical context. This survey research argues that understanding these challenges requires an analysis of historical legacies, including pre-colonial structures, colonial administration, and post-independence socialist policies.

Purpose and objectives: The purpose is to systematically survey and analyse the perceived historical legacies influencing governance challenges in Tanzania from 2021 to 2026. Its objectives are to identify which historical periods are viewed as most impactful and to delineate the specific governance areas they affect.

Methodology: A nationally representative survey of 1,200 Tanzanian adults was conducted in late 2025, using stratified random sampling. The questionnaire employed Likert-scale and open-ended questions to gauge perceptions on historical influences across five governance domains: leadership accountability, public participation, resource distribution, gender equity, and institutional trust.

Findings: A key insight is the strong perceived link between centralised colonial and post-independence systems and contemporary constraints on local-level participation. Specifically, 68% of respondents agreed that historical centralisation ‘significantly’ or ‘very significantly’ hinders grassroots decision-making. Pre-colonial communal models were frequently cited as a missed opportunity for more inclusive frameworks, with notable implications for women’s leadership pathways.

Conclusion: The survey confirms that Tanzanians perceive a direct relationship between historical administrative legacies and current governance impediments, particularly regarding decentralisation and citizen engagement. Historical legacies are viewed as actively shaping the present governance landscape.

Recommendations: Policymakers should design civic education programmes that explicitly address these historical continuities. Decentralisation reforms should be informed by studies of both pre-colonial participatory systems and the entrenched patterns of centralisation that followed, with a specific focus on enhancing gender-inclusive governance.

Key words: historical legacies, governance, Tanzania, centralisation, public perception, survey, institutional trust, gender equity.

Contribution statement: This article provides an evidence-based mapping of public perceptions on the historical roots of governance challenges in Tanzania, offering a quantified foundation for historically-informed policy analysis within the field of African studies.

Keywords: *Historical Legacies, Governance Challenges, East Africa, Survey Research, Post-Colonial State, Political Accountability, Institutional Memory*