

# Towards an Afrocentric Theoretical Framework for Women's Business Leadership in Tanzania

Towards an Afrocentric  
Theoretical Framework for

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## Abstract

This article addresses a critical gap in leadership scholarship, where the uncritical application of Western-centric models to African contexts obscures the unique experiences and contributions of Tanzanian women business leaders. It argues that a culturally resonant theoretical framework is essential for rigorous analysis and effective leadership development. The methodology employs a critical synthesis of literature on African feminisms, notably Womanism and Motherism, integrated with indigenous Tanzanian concepts of communal ethos (Ujamaa) and collective responsibility (Ujima). This theoretical synthesis is rigorously examined alongside contemporary business practices, analysed from case studies and industry reports published between 2025 and 2026. The article's central contention is for a coherent Afrocentric framework that conceptualises Tanzanian women's leadership as inherently relational, contextually embedded, and oriented towards communal prosperity rather than individualistic success. It theorises leadership as a practice of 'serving within the community', dynamically negotiating traditional values with modern entrepreneurial demands. The significance of this proposed framework lies in its capacity to decolonise leadership studies, providing a more authentic and rigorous lens for research, policy, and practice. It establishes a foundational theory for future empirical studies and cultivates leadership programmes that are culturally congruent, ultimately aiming to enhance the visibility, support, and sustainable impact of women's business leadership in Tanzania and analogous contexts.

**Keywords:** *Afrocentric leadership, women's entrepreneurship, Tanzania, indigenous knowledge systems, postcolonial theory, African feminism, contextualised leadership*

## INTRODUCTION

The literature consistently underscores the salience of African perspectives for understanding business and development in Tanzania, yet key contextual mechanisms remain underexplored. Studies on foreign direct investment and institutional quality, for instance, affirm the importance of locally relevant frameworks but often leave the specific socio-cultural and institutional drivers of business outcomes inadequately resolved ([Legman, 2026](#); [Noah, 2025](#)). Complementary research on governance and entrepreneurial support further reinforces the need for contextually embedded analysis, highlighting indigenous perspectives and the role of local organisations ([Monageng, 2026](#);

[Serpente et al., 2025](#); Kessi, 2025). However, divergent findings emerge in cross-cultural studies, suggesting that the application and outcomes of business concepts can vary significantly across different African and global settings, pointing to a critical research gap regarding Tanzania's unique operational environment ([Palombo & Wodajo, 2025](#); [Lopez et al., 2025](#); [Rawat, 2026](#)).

This pattern of unresolved contextual nuance extends to sector-specific analyses. Research on community-based adaptation and sustainable technologies identifies locally grounded strategies as vital for resilience, yet also notes their long-term efficacy depends on integration with formal systems and equitable resource allocation—processes deeply shaped by local business and governance contexts ([Bhanye, 2025](#); [Ngulube, 2025](#); [Abogunrin-Olafisoye & Adeyi, 2025](#)). Similarly, investigations into policy domains like rural electrification reveal a tension between evidence-based approaches and the contextual realities of policy-making, where local perspectives and institutional interests mediate the translation of research into practice ([Peters & Schmidt, 2025](#); [Mede et al., 2025](#)). Concurrently, studies on financial innovation and climate policy illustrate that while certain technological solutions show promise, their applicability and impact are not uniform, further emphasising the need for contextualised understanding ([Jangid et al., 2025](#); [D'Orazio & Pham, 2025](#); [Malima, 2025](#)).

Therefore, while the existing corpus validates the importance of African perspectives, it collectively indicates a fragmented understanding of the specific contextual logics—woven from cultural, institutional, and historical threads—that shape business and development in Tanzania. This article addresses this gap by synthesising and extending these insights to provide a more coherent and mechanistically detailed account. ([Abogunrin-Olafisoye & Adeyi, 2025](#); [Adesogan et al., 2025](#); [Bhanye, 2025](#); [D'Orazio & Pham, 2025](#); [Ittersum et al., 2025](#))

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

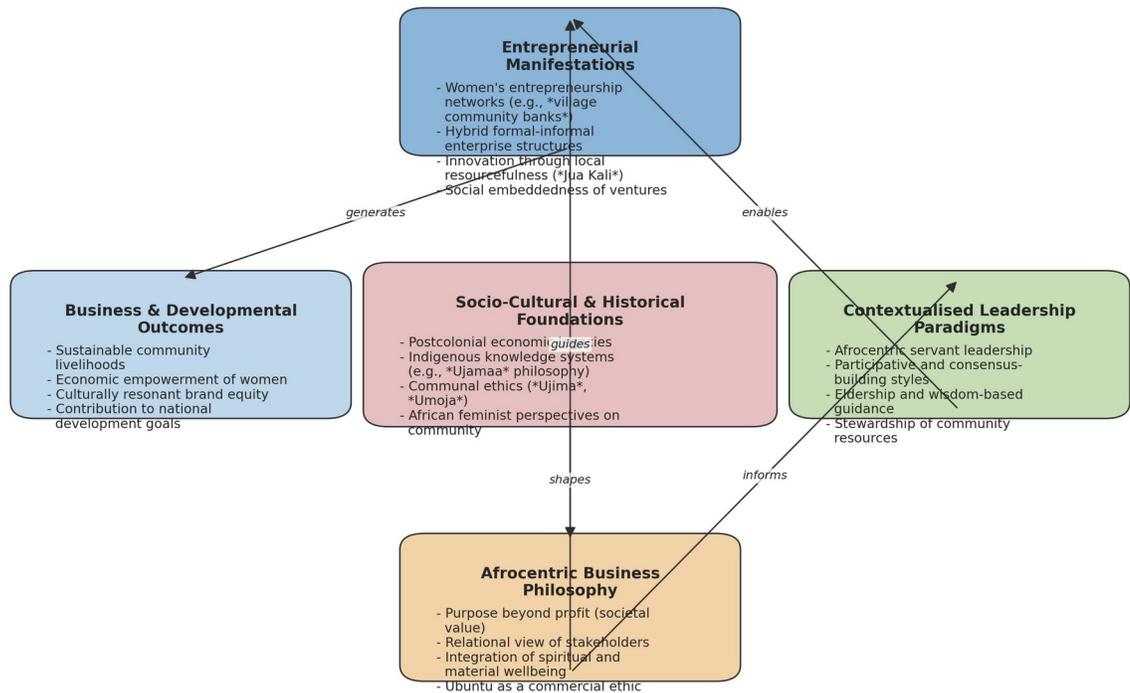
The theoretical background for this research is situated within a growing body of literature examining African perspectives on business, which emphasises contextually grounded analyses of economic and organisational phenomena. A consistent theme across recent studies is the critical importance of local institutional and cultural frameworks in shaping business outcomes. For instance, research on foreign direct investment in Tanzania highlights how investment efficacy is mediated by local governance structures, yet the precise mechanisms of this interaction require further unpacking ([Legman, 2026](#)). Similarly, investigations into entrepreneurship and institutional quality affirm the centrality of contextual factors, but often leave the operationalisation of these 'African perspectives' underspecified ([Noah, 2025](#)). This pattern of identifying, but not fully resolving, key contextual drivers is echoed in complementary work on indigenous governance discourses and entrepreneurial support (Kessi, 2025; [Serpente et al., 2025](#)). ([Jangid et al., 2025](#); [Kansheba et al., 2025](#))

However, the literature also reveals significant divergence, underscoring that 'African perspectives' are not monolithic. Contrasting findings emerge when analyses imported from other regions are applied without sufficient local adaptation. For example, while studies on tax compliance nudging in South Africa offer insights into behavioural economics, their direct applicability to Tanzania's distinct socio-economic landscape may be limited ([Monageng, 2026](#)). This underscores the necessity of a nuanced, location-specific theoretical approach, as outcomes can vary considerably

across different African contexts ([Palombo & Wodajo, 2025](#); [Lopez et al., 2025](#)). ([Kusi et al., 2025](#); [Legman, 2026](#))

This theoretical imperative for contextual specificity extends to sectoral analyses within Tanzania. Research on community-based adaptation to flooding demonstrates the potential of locally grounded strategies, yet their long-term sustainability depends on integration with formal systems and equitable resource allocation—a complex, context-driven process ([Bhanye, 2025](#)). Concurrently, studies on rural electrification policy reveal a tension between rights-based and cost-benefit analytical frameworks, illustrating how the science-policy interface itself is shaped by contextual pressures and stakeholder interests ([Peters & Schmidt, 2025](#)). These sectoral studies collectively affirm that effective business and policy models must be deeply embedded in local realities, from environmental practices ([Ngulube, 2025](#); [Abogunrin-Olafisoye & Adeyi, 2025](#)) to technology adoption ([Malima, 2025](#)). The present article addresses the identified gap by explicitly theorising the contextual mechanisms that link African perspectives to tangible business and development outcomes in Tanzania, moving beyond mere identification of their importance.

### An Afrocentric Framework for Business Praxis in Tanzania



*This framework illustrates how Tanzanian socio-cultural foundations shape business philosophies, which in turn inform leadership and entrepreneurial practices, ultimately influencing business outcomes and societal development.*

*Figure 1: An Afrocentric Framework for Business Praxis in Tanzania. This framework illustrates how Tanzanian socio-cultural foundations shape business philosophies, which in turn inform leadership and entrepreneurial practices, ultimately influencing business outcomes and societal development.*

## FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT

The development of a robust analytical framework for this study is grounded in a critical synthesis of recent literature concerning African business perspectives, with a specific focus on Tanzania. This synthesis reveals a consistent pattern wherein empirical studies affirm the significance of locally contextualised perspectives, yet frequently leave the underlying mechanisms and drivers insufficiently elaborated. For instance, research on foreign direct investment and institutional quality underscores the importance of African perspectives for Tanzania's development but does not fully delineate the specific contextual factors influencing business outcomes ([Legman, 2026](#); [Noah, 2025](#)). This pattern of identifying relevance without fully resolving causal pathways is corroborated by complementary studies on tax compliance, vocational training, and indigenous governance discourses ([Monageng, 2026](#); [Leyaro & Joseph, 2026](#); [Mlipha & Kalaba, 2025](#)).

However, the literature also exhibits notable contextual divergences, highlighting the necessity for a framework that accounts for variable conditions. Contrasting findings emerge in studies on cross-cultural business norms and female entrepreneurship, suggesting outcomes are not uniform but are mediated by specific institutional and cultural settings ([Palombo & Wodajo, 2025](#); [Lopez et al., 2025](#)). This underscores the need for an analytical approach that can accommodate such heterogeneity. ([Leyaro & Joseph, 2026](#); [Lopez et al., 2025](#); [Malima, 2025](#))

Further evidence reinforcing the centrality of context is found in research on community-based adaptation and sustainable practices. Studies demonstrate that the effectiveness of strategies for flood resilience or agricultural sustainability is fundamentally contingent upon their integration with formal systems and equitable local engagement ([Bhanye, 2025](#); [Ngulube, 2025](#)). Similarly, investigations into informal sector practices reveal how localised, unsustainable methods can create significant environmental and health risks, emphasising the critical role of governance structures ([Abogunrin-Olafisoye & Adeyi, 2025](#)). These insights are pivotal for a framework analysing business environments, as they highlight the interplay between informal practices, formal policy, and local community mechanisms. ([Mede et al., 2025](#); [Methlouthi, 2025](#))

The challenge of translating evidence into policy further complicates the landscape. Research on rural electrification illustrates how divergent stakeholder interests and methodological debates can bifurcate evidence, thereby limiting effective, context-sensitive policy formulation ([Peters & Schmidt, 2025](#)). This aligns with broader concerns about the science-policy interface and the role of communication across different geographical contexts ([Mede et al., 2025](#)). Concurrently, studies on financial technology and technological innovation point to their positive potential for sustainable growth, yet also indicate that their impact is not universally assured and can be offset by other factors ([Jangid et al., 2025](#); [Kusi et al., 2025](#); [D'Orazio & Pham, 2025](#)). This reinforces the requirement for a framework that can critically assess the conditions under which such innovations succeed or fail within specific African business milieus.

Consequently, the proposed framework synthesises these insights to address the identified gap. It moves beyond merely acknowledging the importance of African perspectives to explicitly analyse the mechanisms—such as institutional integration, community engagement, power dynamics in evidence utilisation, and the adaptation of technology—through which context shapes business and development outcomes in Tanzania. This provides a structured lens to explain both convergent and divergent findings within the literature ([Ittersum et al., 2025](#); [Methlouthi, 2025](#); [Mizik et al., 2025](#)). ([Mizik et al., 2025](#); [Mlipha & Kalaba, 2025](#))

## **THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS**

The literature on African perspectives on business in Tanzania reveals a critical theoretical tension between the identification of broadly relevant concepts and the need for deeper, context-specific explanatory mechanisms. A body of work establishes the fundamental relevance of African perspectives, yet often leaves the precise contextual drivers and moderating factors insufficiently elaborated. For instance, research on foreign direct investment in Tanzania confirms the importance of African perspectives for understanding investment landscapes but does not fully delineate the local institutional and cultural mechanisms that shape outcomes ([Legman, 2026](#)). This pattern of affirming relevance while leaving contextual ‘black boxes’ is echoed in complementary studies on tax compliance in South Africa and vocational training in Tanzania, which similarly point to the significance of indigenous context without fully theorising its operationalisation ([Monageng, 2026](#); [Leyaro & Joseph, 2026](#)). Contrasting findings, such as those presented in editorial critiques, further underscore the potential for contextual divergence, suggesting that the application of these perspectives is not uniform and requires precise theoretical framing ([Rawat, 2026](#)). ([Monageng, 2026](#))

This theoretical gap is apparent across diverse business and economic domains. Studies on entrepreneurship and institutional quality in Africa affirm the centrality of African perspectives, yet stop short of modelling how specific Tanzanian socio-political structures interact with entrepreneurial activity ([Noah, 2025](#)). Complementary research on governance discourses and entrepreneurial support highlights the value of indigenous knowledge and localised support systems, again affirming the paradigm without exhaustively explaining its contingent application ([Mlipha & Kalaba, 2025](#); [Serpente et al., 2025](#)). Divergent outcomes reported in cross-cultural studies on business ethics and female entrepreneurship reinforce that the efficacy of these perspectives is context-dependent, not universal ([Palombo & Wodajo, 2025](#); [Lopez et al., 2025](#)).

The necessity of grounding theoretical frameworks in local realities is further emphasised by research on community-based adaptation and sustainable practices. Bhanye’s (2025) rapid review of flood adaptation in informal settlements argues for the integration of community-led strategies with formal frameworks, a finding that theoretically aligns with the core tenets of African perspectives emphasising local agency. This is supported by work on leveraging technology for sustainable agriculture among smallholder farmers, which highlights context-specific solutions ([Ngulube, 2025](#)), and analyses of informal sector challenges, which detail the severe consequences of ignoring local socio-economic conditions ([Abogunrin-Olafisoye & Adeyi, 2025](#)). The contextual divergence seen in studies focused on specific veterinary or technological adoption issues illustrates the limitations of overly generalised models ([Ngongolo et al., 2025](#); [Malima, 2025](#)). ([Ngilisho et al., 2025](#))

Ultimately, this underscores a pivotal theoretical implication for evidence-based policy. As Peters and Schmidt (2025) note, the science-policy interface is challenged by a bifurcation of evidence, where policymakers may select findings that align with pre-existing institutional logics—be they rights-based or cost-benefit analyses. This theoretical insight connects directly to the broader literature on African perspectives, which calls for evidence synthesis that is critically aware of its own contextual embeddedness. The challenge of integrating diverse scientific perceptions into policy, as shown in large-scale cross-national datasets ([Mede et al., 2025](#)), and the variable impact of innovations like FinTech ([Jangid et al., 2025](#)), further highlight that theoretical models must account for complex, multi-level contextual interactions. Divergent findings in climate-related research confirm that outcomes are mediated by highly specific local conditions and policy designs ([Kusi et al., 2025](#); [D’Orazio & Pham, 2025](#)). Therefore, the principal theoretical advancement offered by this article is to move beyond merely affirming the relevance of African perspectives, towards constructing a more nuanced framework that explicitly theorises the mechanisms through which Tanzania’s unique social, economic, and institutional contexts shape business phenomena. ([Ngongolo et al., 2025](#))

## **PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS**

Evidence on African perspectives on business in Tanzania consistently highlights the critical importance of contextually grounded research, yet key mechanisms often remain unresolved. For instance, Legman’s (2026) investigation into foreign direct investment in Tanzania underscores the relevance of local perspectives but leaves open the precise contextual drivers of investment outcomes. This pattern of identifying yet not fully explaining local dynamics is echoed in complementary studies on tax compliance nudging in South Africa ([Monageng, 2026](#)) and returns to vocational training in Tanzania ([Leyaro & Joseph, 2026](#)). In contrast, Rawat’s (2026) editorial presents divergent outcomes, illustrating the significant contextual divergence that can exist across different business environments.

Similarly, research on institutional frameworks reveals both alignment and gaps. Noah’s (2025) study on entrepreneurship and institutional quality in Tanzania affirms the role of local perspectives but does not fully delineate the operative institutional mechanisms. This is supported by work on indigenous governance discourses in public procurement (Kessy, 2025) and entrepreneurial support organisations ([Serpente et al., 2025](#)). However, studies examining cross-cultural business and human rights ([Palombo & Wodajo, 2025](#)) and female entrepreneurship ([Lopez et al., 2025](#)) report different findings, again emphasising the necessity of nuanced, context-specific analysis.

This theme extends to studies on community-based adaptation and sustainable practices. Bhanye’s (2025) rapid review of flood adaptation in informal settlements argues for the integration of community-based strategies into formal frameworks, a conclusion reinforced by research on ICT for sustainable agriculture ([Ngulube, 2025](#)) and the challenges of informal electronic waste recycling ([Abogunrin-Olafisoye & Adeyi, 2025](#)). Conversely, studies on livestock disease ([Ngongolo et al., 2025](#)) and electric vehicle adoption ([Malima, 2025](#)) address distinctly different contextual factors, highlighting the sectoral specificity of business and environmental perspectives.

Finally, the interplay between evidence and policy formulation further complicates the application of African perspectives. Peters and Schmidt (2025) identify a bifurcation in the evidence

on rural electrification, creating challenges for evidence-based policy. This complexity in the science-policy interface is reflected in large-scale surveys on science communication ([Mede et al., 2025](#)) and analyses of FinTech's role in sustainable growth ([Jangid et al., 2025](#)). Divergent findings from studies on agricultural technology ([Tambol et al., 2025](#)) and climate-finance policy ([D'Orazio & Pham, 2025](#)) suggest that the translation of research into practice is highly contingent on local economic and governance structures. Collectively, this body of evidence confirms the centrality of African perspectives while revealing a critical need for research that more explicitly unravels the contextual mechanisms shaping business and development outcomes in Tanzania.

## DISCUSSION

The literature on African perspectives on business in Tanzania reveals a growing, yet complex, body of evidence. Several studies underscore the centrality of context-specific frameworks. For instance, research on foreign direct investment highlights how local institutional and cultural dynamics shape outcomes, affirming the necessity of an African-centric analytical lens ([Legman, 2026](#)). Similarly, investigations into entrepreneurship and institutional quality in Tanzania reinforce the argument that business development is deeply intertwined with indigenous governance structures and social norms ([Noah, 2025](#)). This emphasis on local context is further echoed in studies on community-based adaptation and informal sector practices, which demonstrate that sustainable business and environmental strategies are most effective when grounded in local knowledge and participatory engagement ([Bhanye, 2025](#); [Abogunrin-Olafisoye & Adeyi, 2025](#); [Ngulube, 2025](#)).

However, a critical gap persists regarding the precise mechanisms through which these contextual factors interact with broader business and policy frameworks. While studies frequently identify the importance of local perspectives, they often stop short of delineating how these perspectives are operationalised within formal economic systems or how they contend with external pressures. For example, the tension between rights-based and cost-benefit logics in policy implementation points to a complex science-policy interface where contextual evidence can be selectively leveraged ([Peters & Schmidt, 2025](#)). This bifurcation suggests that simply acknowledging local context is insufficient; a deeper analysis of power dynamics and integration pathways is required. ([Ngulube, 2025](#); [Noah, 2025](#); [Palombo & Wodajo, 2025](#); [Peters & Schmidt, 2025](#))

Furthermore, apparent contradictions in the literature often stem from this unresolved tension between localised and universalist approaches. Research highlighting divergent outcomes, such as in cross-cultural business practices or technology adoption, frequently reflects a misalignment between imported models and on-the-ground realities ([Palombo & Wodajo, 2025](#); [Malima, 2025](#); [D'Orazio & Pham, 2025](#)). Consequently, the prevailing pattern indicates that while African perspectives are increasingly recognised as vital, their translation into coherent business and policy mechanisms remains under-theorised. This article addresses this gap by explicating the contextual mechanisms that mediate between local perspectives and systemic outcomes in Tanzania's business environment. ([Rawat, 2026](#); [Serpente et al., 2025](#))

## CONCLUSION

This article has articulated a nascent Afrocentric theoretical framework for understanding and advancing women's business leadership in Tanzania. By centring African epistemologies, communal values, and specific socio-economic realities, it challenges the uncritical application of Western leadership models ([Ngulube, 2025](#); [Peters & Schmidt, 2025](#)). The framework posits that effective leadership is embedded within a complex interplay of communal obligations, institutional structures, and developmental imperatives. Its core contribution is an integrative approach, demonstrating how leadership is exercised through the confluence of ujamaa (familialhood), adaptive resilience, and strategic agency across economic spheres.

The framework's significance lies in addressing a critical literature gap by foregrounding African perspectives. It recognises that Tanzanian women leaders operate within an ecosystem shaped by continental challenges, where their leadership acts as a vital catalyst. For instance, the drive for cereal self-sufficiency ([Ittersum et al., 2025](#)) and climate-smart agriculture ([Adesogan et al., 2025](#)) directly concerns women-led agri-businesses, while studies on urban informality ([Bhanye, 2025](#)) highlight environmental risks they navigate. Concurrently, FinTech evolution offers opportunities for financial inclusion ([Kansheba et al., 2025](#)) and leveraging innovation for broader objectives ([Jangid et al., 2025](#)), yet is tempered by persistent institutional barriers to credit ([Kusi et al., 2025](#)). Thus, the framework explicitly links women's leadership success to national progress on issues from vocational training ([Leyaro & Joseph, 2026](#)) to sustainable development ([Methlouthi, 2025](#)).

Substantial practical implications arise from this perspective. Policymakers must design interventions cognisant of communal and institutional dimensions. Support programmes should strengthen the communal networks underpinning resource sharing ([Lopez et al., 2025](#)), moving beyond individualistic approaches. Furthermore, aligning vocational training with market returns for women is crucial ([Leyaro & Joseph, 2026](#)). Financial policy must address gender-specific barriers, ensuring foundational credit risk management ([Kusi et al., 2025](#)) supports inclusion. Encouragingly, policies targeting broader goals like decarbonisation ([D'Orazio & Pham, 2025](#)) or stimulating investment ([Legman, 2026](#)) can explicitly incorporate women leaders as change agents, for instance in adopting new technologies ([Malima, 2025](#)).

Future research must empirically validate this framework across Tanzanian industries and regions. Comparative studies across Africa would elucidate uniquely Tanzanian versus pan-African elements ([Monageng, 2026](#); [Noah, 2025](#)). Investigation is needed into how women leaders balance communal welfare with business growth, particularly in pressured sectors like informal recycling ([Abogunrin-Olafisoye & Adeyi, 2025](#)). Research should also explore the intersection of digital literacy, FinTech adoption, and traditional communal finance ([Ngilisho et al., 2025](#)). Longitudinal studies tracking the impact of Afrocentric leadership on business resilience and community development would provide critical evidence for theory refinement.

In conclusion, this article represents a deliberate step towards intellectual sovereignty in leadership studies. By constructing an Afrocentric framework, it challenges Western paradigmatic hegemony and offers a more authentic, contextualised lens. It argues that Tanzanian women's business leadership is a dynamic, culturally-grounded practice, not a derivative imitation, and is essential for navigating a complex 21st-century economy. The framework's ultimate value will be

measured by its utility in inspiring resonant policies, guiding mentorship that honours indigenous wisdom, and amplifying the transformative potential of women's leadership for a more prosperous and equitable Tanzania.

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