



## Determinants of poor implementation of strategic planning in the public sector in Tanzania: The case of DAWASA and Ubungo Municipality

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**Recommended Citation:** Sulle, A. (2026). *Determinants of poor implementation of strategic planning in the public sector in Tanzania: The case of DAWASA and Ubungo Municipality*. *African Quarterly Social Science Review*, 3(3), 40–49.

<https://doi.org/10.51867/AQSSR.3.3.4>

### ABSTRACT

Strategic planning has become an important management tool for public organizations in most countries including Tanzania. It is however, noted in the current public sector literature that this management tool has been poorly implemented in many developing countries. For instance, since the 1990s public organizations in Tanzania are required to implement strategic planning and by now the assumption is that most public organizations should have developed sufficient experience to effectively implement strategic planning. However, studies have demonstrated that most public organizations in Tanzania have poorly implemented strategic planning as their management tools. This study examines factors affecting the effective implementation of strategic planning in two selected public organizations in Tanzania, namely DAWASA and Ubungo municipality. This study is informed by institutional theory and by design it is a case study. The study used both primary and secondary data to achieve its noble mission. The target population of the study comprised 414 employees from both DAWASA and Ubungo Municipality. In addition; two sampling techniques were employed; purposive and simple sampling techniques to obtain a sample of 165 respondents. Quantitative data from questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics with SPSS version 26, while qualitative data were analyzed through content analysis to identify pattern of issues that are of interest in relation to our research objective. Our findings noted that both DAWASA and Ubungo Municipality have been implementing strategic planning as part of their service delivery tool. It is further noted that, although these two public organizations claim that strategic planning plays a critical role in enhancing their organizational performance, but strategic planning is poorly implemented in these two public organizations. Our study has further noted that factors such as resource constraints, poor alignment of resources with planned activities, resistance to change and bureaucratic procedures have significantly affected the effective implementation of strategic planning at the two public organizations studied. The study concludes that strategic planning has been poorly implemented due to factors identified. The study recommends that public organization to address factors that hinders effective implementation of this reform aspect so as to improve public service delivery. In addition, future research should be expanded to include more public organizations across regions for comparative analysis so as to broaden our insights into sector-specific challenges and best practices in implementing strategic planning in public organizations.

**Keywords:** DAWASA, Public Sector Organizations, Reforms, Strategies, Strategic Planning, Tanzania, Ubungo Municipality

### I. INTRODUCTION

Strategic planning is crucial for enhancing the performance of public organizations worldwide, involving key components such as effective implementation, performance enhancement, and overcoming implementation challenges. In general, strategic planning has demonstrated significant benefits in improving public service delivery and even in increasing organizations' productivity, and especially in the private sector. For instance, in Germany, strategic planning has led to a 15% increase in operational efficiency and a 20% improvement in stakeholder satisfaction (Dedda & Paloni, 2020). In Singapore strategic planning has resulted in a 25% rise in organizational efficiency and a 30% reduction in operating expenses (Kearney & Berman, 2018).

Since the 1990s, most African countries have also adopted and implemented strategic planning as part of their public sector reforms. For example, the Nigeria's strategic plans, such as the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan, aim to foster development despite corruption challenges (Cepiku *et al.*, 2017). South Africa's National Development Plan and Outcome-Based Budgeting has improved performance management, though issues like high poverty rates remain unaddressed (Aversano *et al.*, 2017). Kenya's strategic vision 2030 underscores the importance of stakeholder engagement and risk management, although political instability poses barriers (Wanjiku & Anyieni, 2022). Since the 1990s, Tanzania has also adopted and used strategic planning policy as part of the broader public sector reforms. Under public sector reforms and with the adoption of strategic planning initiatives, every public organization in Tanzania is required to set out its vision, purpose and strategic objectives that must be annually achieved, the prime

purpose being to improve the quality and efficiency of public services delivery (Nnko, 2023; Salum, 2018). Effective implementation of strategic planning is said to benefit organizations in many ways. According to Tarifi (2021) strategic planning provides structured organization vision and plans that are effective in guiding their directions and expected outcomes in terms of public services. It further helps organizations to align their resources and efforts to achieve pre-determined organizational goals.

It is, however, noted in the extant literature that Tanzania is still experiencing poor public sector delivery, despite years of reforms including the adoption of strategic planning in most public sector organizations (Nnko, 2023). It is noted that, most public organizations have not adhered to the principles of effective strategic planning implementation (Nnko, 2023; Salum, 2018). The literature indicates that poor leadership, lack of resources and bureaucratic procedures can impede the implementation of strategic planning in the public sector (Tarifi, 2021; Salum 2018). The problems of effective implementation of this reform model can vary from organization to organization and from country to country. For example, although most public organizations in Tanzania have adopted strategic planning frameworks but their effective implementation is still questionable (Ntare *et al.*, 2022).

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

Strategic planning is increasingly recognized as essential for enhancing the performance of large public enterprises. However, its impact on performance management remains inadequately explored, particularly in the context of Tanzania. For example, according to Salum (2018) most public sector organizations in Tanzania have demonstrated poor implementation of strategic planning. This observation highlights a significant issue: many public organizations lack effective strategic planning frameworks. Furthermore, 60% of these institutions have consistently struggled to meet their performance objectives because of poor implementation of their strategic planning (Nyambitta & Mohamed, 2022). This suggests there are serious problems when it comes to the effective implementation of strategic planning in public organizations in Tanzania, including Ubungo Municipality and the Dar es Salaam Water Supply and Sanitation Authority (DAWASA). Without robust strategic planning frameworks, these organizations may face many challenges in integrating their performance management systems with their strategic goals. They are at the risk of experiencing inadequate stakeholder engagement, inefficient resource allocation, and insufficient risk management practices (Ntare *et al.*, 2022). As a consequence, key projects related to infrastructure, service delivery, and socioeconomic development could stagnate, impeding Tanzania's broader developmental objectives. Addressing issues related to effective strategic management is crucial for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of public organizations. The main objective of this paper is therefore to examine factors affecting the effective implementation of strategic planning at the DAWASA and Ubungo municipality. This paper seeks to contribute to the current literature on strategic planning in two ways. First, it seeks to shed light into factors affecting the implementation of this reform component in Tanzania, and secondly and more importantly, the findings of the paper will inform scholars and practitioners on how to improve the implementation of this reform component by addressing factors that inhibit its effective implementation in the public sector in Tanzania and elsewhere where similar problems exist.

### 1.2 Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine and determine factors affecting effective implementation of strategic planning in the public sector in Tanzania

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

In this section we position our paper in a broader theoretical framework. The aim is to understand the evolution of strategic planning in the public sector and to grasp how it is to be effectively implemented from a theoretical point of view. This study is informed by two theoretical perspectives outlined below.

#### 2.1.1 New Public Management (NPM) Perspectives

The adoption of strategic planning in the public sector is informed by a number of theoretical perspectives. Although management theories have informed strategy development, the New Public Management (NPM) paradigm has a strong influence on the adoption and implementation of strategic planning in the public sector (Kaphale, *at al.*, 2024). The main arguments of the NPM paradigm is that the public sector should abandon its old centralized Weberian administrative system in favour of more efficient and result-oriented approaches like those used in the private sector (Hood, 1991). Informed by NPM ideas, the aim of public sector reform was to replace the excessively bureaucratic traditional public administration system with a new form of management system that is efficient and result-oriented. NPM demands the public sector to be flexible, transparent, and result-oriented. Strategic planning ideas are hence embedded in the NPM ideals. For instance, an important tenet of NPM is the emphasis on a management system that ensures organizations to develop clear performance objectives and other elements such as performance measurement,



evaluation and enhanced accountability (Kaphale *et al.*, 2024). By development strategic planning, public organizations can easily focus on achievable organizational goals, and can transform their organizations into efficient and result-oriented institutions. All these elements are embedded in the NPM theoretical thinking about the conception and implementation of strategic planning in the public sector.

Strategic planning is primarily concerned with setting long-term objectives, determining the necessary actions to achieve those goals, and aligning organizational resources accordingly. It provides a roadmap for an organization's future growth and development by assessing both the internal and external environments (Tarifi, 2021). It focuses on what an organization wants to achieve and to determine the best way to get there, often in response to evolving challenges and opportunities in the environment (Bryson, 2018). Unlike short-term or tactical planning, which focuses on day-to-day activities, strategic planning is long-term and outcome-oriented, often stretching over several years. It is a top management's disciplined efforts to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide the future of organizations in terms of what they should do and why they should do for their existence (Salum, 2018). As a management tool, strategic planning plays a vital role in guiding organizations to sailing through their sometimes turbulence environment, but also in enabling organizations to put in place both policies and practices that guide their organizational objectives and the required performance outcomes. It is fundamentally a process of defining an organization's future direction and making decisions on allocating resources to pursue this direction (Bryson, 2018).

### 2.1.2 Institutional theory

Although, the NPM paradigm and its various ideas have been the driving force for public sector reforms, including the adoption of strategic planning in the public sector, institutional theory has provided an important understand of why most reforms, including the adoption of strategic planning may fail. According to institutional theory, the effectiveness of reforms are not only determined by their technical superiority design but by other contextual factors in which reforms are implemented (March & Olsen, 1984). The main argument of this theory is that public organizations do not operate in vacuum, but they operate in an environment shaped and influenced by institutional factors such as culture, informal and formal rules, politics, policies and inform norms that shape the behaviour of actors in the public sector (March & Olsen, 1984). The main assumption of this theory is that in the public sector, organization performance are determined by both formal institutions such as policies, law and bureaucratic procedures and by informal institutions such as shared norms, values, traditions and leadership styles (March & Olsen, 1984). It is therefore imperative the adoption and the eventual implementation of strategic management in Tanzania may have been influenced by many institutional factors. This theory is hence important in providing a holistic perspective that capture the interplay of various factors in the context in which strategic planning is being implemented.

## 2.2 Empirical Review

A number of empirical studies have examined the implementation of strategic planning in the public sector around the world (Nnko, 2024). For instance, according to Salum (2018) public organizations with supportive environment and sufficient resources can easily adopt and implement its strategic planning. Similarly, Nkosi (2015) who studied the implementation of strategic planning in local government in South Africa noted that supportive environment and adequate resources are a critical factor in the successive implementation of strategic planning. An important element of supporting environment is political leaders, including ministers and local government officials, who should play a crucial role in championing and ensuring the adoption of strategic planning. These leaders provide policy direction and resources for public organizations and hence they are vital actors in the success and failure of strategic planning. Furthermore, the change in political landscape can present significant challenges, such as changes in leadership or shifts in policy priorities, which may delay or obstruct implementation process (Salum, 2018). Similarly, Ohemeng and Aye (2016) noted that political interference in Ghana not only affected the implementation of strategic planning but also weakened public sector accountability. Additionally, budgetary allocation is a key political issue that directly impacts the feasibility of strategic plans. In many cases, the availability of financial resources to support strategic initiatives depends on political decisions, and competing priorities may lead to insufficient funding for crucial projects.

In their study of factors affecting the implementation of strategic planning in the Kenyan public sector, Masava (2018) noted adequate financing, competent personnel, and effective control systems are crucial for effective strategic planning systems, Bureaucratic processes in the public sector organizations can also present various forms of resistance to effective implementation of strategic planning. This resistance often arises due to fear of clear performance accountability, or job displacement, as middle management and staff may worry that new strategies will lead to downsizing or changes in their roles (Ngwabije & Gitahi, 2023). Resistance may also arise from bureaucratic organizations' cultural inertia, since staff members may be hesitant to break long-standing customs and habits of not wanting to report performance results. Bureaucrats prefer to operation in an environment of performance management



ambiguity where performance outcomes are often not clearly indicated. Therefore effective implementation of strategic planning which seeks to put in place transparency in performance outcomes and accountability becomes a serious problem that bureaucrats would wish to avoid and if necessary reforms to that end can be sabotaged. Furthermore, the fear of increased workload from new strategic initiatives can deter employees from fully embracing reform changes. Resistance may also stem from organizational politics, where certain individuals or groups feel threatened by a shift in power or authority within the organization (Bryson, 2018). To overcome these challenges, comprehensive change management efforts are necessary, including employee training, clear communication, stakeholder engagement, and fostering a culture of innovation to facilitate the adoption of new strategies (Nnko, 2023).

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Research Design

By design, this paper is based on a case study approach and the study adopted a descriptive survey method to examine and understand the determinants of poor implementation of strategic planning at DAWASA and Ubungo Municipality. This design is chosen because of its usefulness in understanding social phenomenon in their natural setting.

#### 3.2 The Study Area

The study was conducted at Ubungo Municipality and DAWASA in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. DAWASA, which is a corporate body under the ministry of Water, is responsible for water and sewerage services in the commercial city of Dar es Salaam and the nearby areas. DAWASA is headed by chief executive officer and is structured along various directorates. On the other hand, Ubungo municipality, under the ministry for Local Government is responsible for many governmental administrative functions such as urban planning, local administration, and many other services such health, education, rural roads, safety and security. It is led by an elected council and municipal director, under the overall leadership of district commissioner. In Tanzania districts and municipalities are created through the Decentralization by Devolution (D-by-D) policy.

#### 3.3 Study Population

The study population was composed of 414 employees from both DAWASA and Ubungo Municipality as follows: 210 officials from Ubungo Municipality and 204 officers from DAWASA. The target population was employees working in various sections and from different ranks, including top management, senior officials and employees in the front line operations. Our aim was to get employees who are involved in the management, service delivery and in decision making in both organizations.

#### 3.4 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

This study used two sampling techniques, namely purposive sampling and simple random sampling, to select the needed respondents. Purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling method was used to select respondents on the basis of specific characteristics that are relevant to the study (Manen, 2018). In this case we selected 10 key informants from DAWASA and other 10 from Ubungo municipality. These individuals, including executive directors and heads of key departments were interviewed to gain in-depth insights into strategic planning processes and how it is being implemented in their respective organizations. Furthermore, simple random sampling technique was used to choose 137 staff members from both DAWASA and Ubungo municipality. This approach was designed to help gather a broad, representative sample of employees to complete designated questionnaires, ensuring that the data collected was statistically reliable and reflective of the general employee population. The sample size of 137 respondents was determined using the Yamane (1967) formula. This sample size was calculated to ensure that the study achieves a statistically significant representation of the target population while balancing practical feasibility. We used the following formula to get sample size;

$$n = \frac{N}{(1 + N \cdot e^2)} = \frac{414}{(1 + 414 \cdot 0.07^2)} = 137$$

Where:

n = sample size

N = population

e = 7%.



**Table 1**  
*Study Population and Sample Size*

Category	Population		Total	Sample Size	Sampling Technique
	DAWASA	Ubungo Municipality			
Executives officials	10	10	20	20	Purposive sampling
Staff Members	210	204	414	137	Simple random sampling
Council Members			8	8	Purposive sampling
<b>Total</b>				<b>165</b>	

Source: HR Office – DAWASA& Ubungo Municipality (2024).

### 3.5 Data Collection Instruments

This study used both interview and questionnaire to collect primary data. The questionnaire was designed to employ a Likert Scale survey tool to measure respondents' levels of agreement or disagreement to various statements related to strategic planning, resource allocation, stakeholder engagement, and organizational performance. This approach was intended to provide standardized and quantifiable data, facilitating robust statistical analysis. In addition, interviews were held with key informants in both organizations, not only to supplement information obtained from questionnaire, but also to gain insights from top leadership about factors that influence the implementation of strategic planning in their respective organizations. Also secondary data was sourced from documentary reviews, which included organizational reports, financial statements, and other relevant documents. This secondary data was used to offer contextual background and historical information, complementing the primary data and enhancing the overall analysis of the study's objectives.

To ensure the reliability of the data collected in this study, Cronbach's alpha was utilized. This statistical measure assesses the internal consistency of the data by calculating a reliability coefficient that ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values reflecting greater dependability. A Cronbach's alpha value of 0.70 or above is generally considered acceptable, indicating minimal reliability issues and ensuring that the survey items consistently measured the intended constructs. This approach seeks to improve the robustness of its conclusions by using Cronbach's alpha, giving assurance that the information gathered via the questionnaire accurately reflected the constructs being studied.

### 3.6 Data Analysis

As indicated above, this study used both quantitative and qualitative data to address its research objective. For quantitative data, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 was used. From it, descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and tables were derived to summarize findings. For qualitative data, thematic approach and content analysis were used to identify and analyzed particular patterns of responses from our informants that are relevant for our study. These patterns of responses were then related and linked to information derived from quantitative data for result validation.

### 3.7 Ethical consideration

This study observed established research ethics. In that regards, permission to collect primary was obtained from DAWASA and Ubungo Municipality. Confidentiality and anonymity of respondents was insured and data collected was only used for research purpose.

## IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Factors Affecting the Implementation of Strategic Planning at DAWASA and Ubungo Municipality

Our central research objective in this paper was to examine and understand why strategic planning has been poorly implemented in most public organizations in Tanzania, by focus on two public organizations, namely DAWASA and Ubungo Municipality. As indicated in our methodology section, this research used questionnaires and interviews to collected primary data. Firstly, a total of 137 questionnaires were distributed to respondents from DAWASA and, Ubungo municipality. In total 120 questionnaires were completed and returned to us, resulting in a high response rate of 88%. Our questionnaire was comprehensive in terms of issued raised regarding why strategic planning is poorly implemented in their organizations.

Table 2, below shows interesting results regarding factors that affect effective implementation of strategic planning in the two organizations under study. The lack of adequate resources allocation, bureaucratic resistance to change, the problems of aligning available resources with strategic plans, insufficient employees' engagement in the process of developing strategic planning are significant factors that affect the effective implementation of strategic planning in the two organizations under study. In addition, external factor such as a change in policy and especially



after a general election, when new leadership takes office, have all affected the adopted and effective implementation of strategic planning in the two organizations we studied.

The empirical data for both DAWASA and Ubungo municipality have similar findings despite their slight difference in their governance structures. For examples, overwhelming majority of respondents (79.2%) from Ubungo Municipality think that lack of adequate resources generally affects effective implementation of strategic planning in their organization and for DAWASA those with similar opinions are more than 71%. This suggests that resource constraints are felt across the two organizations under study, potentially impacting the formulation and execution of strategic planning in their respective organizations. Another notable challenge has been the issue of aligning available resource with organizational strategic plans. As noted in the table 2 below, most respondents; 64% from DAWASA and 80.2% from Ubungo municipality admitted that this problem is seriously affecting the implementation of strategic planning in their respective organization. Again, evaluation and monitoring of the progress in the implementation of strategic planning seems to be weak in both organizations as demonstrated by most respondents; DAWASA 67% and Ubungo Municipality, 48%. In addition, most respondents; 70% at DAWASA and 77% at Ubungo municipality are of the opinion that external factors such as policy changes often affects the effective implementation of strategic planning in their respective organizations. They said policy change often as result of leadership change due to political factors such as general election where new government comes to power new policies and priorities

**Table 2**  
*Factors Affecting the Implementation of Strategic Planning (N=120)*

	<b>Statements</b>		<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
DAWASA	Lack of adequate resources is a major barrier to effective strategic planning implementation.	F	0	20	26	40	34
		%	0.0	6.7	11.7	33.3	38.3
	Resistance to change affects the implementation of strategic plans	F	0	9	24	69	18
		%	0	7.5	20	57.5	15
	Challenges in aligning strategic plans with available resources are prevalent	F	0	22	20	74	4
		%	0.0	18.3	16.7	61.7	3.3
	Insufficient employee engagement hinders the effectiveness of strategic planning	F	10	24	20	38	28
		%	8.3	20.0	16.7	31.7	23.3
	Inadequate communication regarding strategic priorities impacts implementation	F	0	15	18	54	33
		%	0	12.5	15	45	27.5
Difficulties in monitoring and evaluating the progress of strategic plans exist	F	5	26	7	52	30	
	%	4.2	21.7	5.8	43.3	25.0	
Internal bureaucratic processes impact the effective implementation of strategic plans	F	0	22	20	44	34	
	%	0.0	18.3	16.7	36.7	28.3	
Challenges with integrating strategic goals into daily operations are encountered	F	2	0	33	56	29	
	%	1.7	0.0	27.5	46.7	24.2	
External factors, such as policy changes, impact the strategic planning process.	F	8	17	25	40	30	
	%	6.7	14.2	20.8	33.3	25.0	
	<b>Statements</b>		<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
Ubungo municipality	Lack of adequate resources is a major barrier to effective strategic planning.	F	0	0	25	54	41
		%	0.0	0.0	20.8	45.0	34.2
	Resistance to change affects the implementation of strategic plans	F	0	0	30	34	56
		%	0.0	0.0	25.0	28.3	46.7
	Challenges in aligning strategic plans with available resources are prevalent	F	0	23	0	73	24
		%	0	19.2	0.0	60.8	20.0
	Insufficient employee engagement hinders the effectiveness of strategic planning	F	14	8	16	28	54
		%	11.7	6.7	13.3	23.3	45.0
	Inadequate communication regarding strategic priorities impacts implementation	F	25	2	23	47	23
		%	20.8	1.7	19.2	39.2	19.2
Difficulties in monitoring and evaluating the progress of strategic plans exist	F	12	24	26	34	24	
	%	10.0	20.0	21.7	28.3	20.0	
Internal bureaucratic processes impact the effective implementation of strategic plans	F	0	20	26	40	34	
	%	0.0	16.7	21.7	33.3	28.3	
Challenges with integrating strategic goals into daily operations are encountered	F	0	15	18	54	33	
	%	0	12.5	15	45	27.5	
External factors, such as policy changes, impact the strategic planning process.	F	0	9	24	69	18	
	%	0	7.5	20	57.5	15	

Key: SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, N = Neutral, A=Agree, SD =Strongly Agree; F= frequency



When these quantitative data were triangulated with qualitative data, a similar observation can be noted. For instance, during the field interviews, respondents have the following views regarding inadequate resource allocations for the effective implementation of strategic planning in their respective organizations. Some participants from DAWASA shared the following insights:

*“Lack of sufficient resources remains a significant obstacle in executing our strategic plans effectively. [One operation Officer from DAWASA, 4th November, 2024]*

*“Resistance to change is another issue we face. There’s always a portion of the workforce that is hesitant to adapt to new strategies, and that slows down the overall implementation process” [Officer - Ubungo Municipality 4th November, 2024]*

These findings suggest that resource constraints and resistance to change are the main barriers to effective strategic planning in both organizations (see table 2 above). This reinforces the need for continuous resource allocation and efforts to manage change effectively within the organization. These responses imply that overcoming these challenges will be crucial for improving the strategic planning process and its implementation.

Again aligning strategic plans with available resources remains a critical challenge for both DAWASA and Ubungo municipality. However, this problem is more pronounced in Ubungo Municipality, where 80.8% of participants reported experiencing difficulties in aligning available resources (budgets) with pre-planned activities. There seems to be huge disparities between available financial resources and planned annual activities in Ubungo municipality. These findings imply that resource planning needs to be aligned with agreed organizational annual plans in both organizations studied (see table4). Field interviews also ascertained this observation;

*“Aligning our strategic plans with available resources is always a challenge. We often find that the plans are more ambitious than the resources we can actually allocate” [Officer - DAWASA, 4th November, 2024]*

*“There are frequent struggles in matching our strategic goals with the resources available. We don’t always have enough to support the execution of our plans effectively” [Officer - Ubungo Municipality, 4th November, 2024]*

*“Employee engagement in the strategic planning process is not always sufficient. Without their active involvement, it’s difficult to implement plans that everyone can support” [Officer - DAWASA, 4th November, 2024]*

*“When employees aren’t engaged, it’s hard to get them to fully back the strategic initiatives. It impacts the overall effectiveness of our planning” [Officer - Ubungo Municipality, 4th November, 2024].*

These empirical data confirm that aligning strategic plans with available resources remains a common challenge in most public organizations. There is a need to better align available resources with the agreed annual organizational performance goals. In fact, this study has noted that there are poorly communications and employee’s engagement in the process of strategic planning development and this is negatively impacting the effectiveness of strategic planning adoption. It is strongly argued in this paper that involving employees more actively in the planning process could significantly improve the success of strategic initiatives in both organizations under study and in public organizations in Tanzania at large. Interviews quote registered below is a testimony to the reality of poor communication between employees and top management of public organization in Tanzania about the reality of the implementation of strategic planning in the public sector.

*“I believe that if the strategic goals were communicated more effectively, we’d be in a better position to implement them successfully. The lack of clear communication is a major issue” [Officer - Ubungo Municipality, 4th November, 2024]*

*“Monitoring and evaluating our progress on strategic plans is always a challenge. We’re not sure if we’re on track because there’s no clear way to track and assess our progress regularly” [Officer - DAWASA, 4th November, 2024]*

A bureaucratic procedure is also significantly affecting the implementation strategic planning in the two organizations studied as shown in Table 2. As noted even the subsequent interviews, bureaucrats have demonstrated a cool approach in accepting and implementation strategic planning in their organizations and that could be systemic problem in the entire public sector in Tanzania.

*“The bureaucratic processes in place make it difficult to implement strategic plans effectively. There’s a lot of red tape that slows down progress” [Officer - DAWASA, 4th November, 2024]*

*“I feel like training is a big issue. Without proper training, it’s hard for employees to execute the strategic plans successfully, and that’s been a major barrier” [Officer - Ubungo Municipality, 4th November, 2024]*



*“There’s a lot of confusion about the implementation processes, and the lack of training just adds to the difficulty. Employees often don’t know how to move forward with the plans”* [Officer - DAWASA, 4th November, 2024]

These responses reinforce the idea that bureaucratic hurdles and inadequate training are significant barriers to the successful implementation of strategic plans. This implies that streamlining internal processes and providing comprehensive training could be key to improving the execution of these plans. These findings indicate that addressing these challenges could lead to smoother and more effective strategic plan implementation within the organization.

The study showed that external factors, such as policy changes, significantly influence the strategic planning process. A higher percentage of respondents from Ubungo (72.5%) cited this issue, compared to 58.3% in DAWASA. This suggests that local government authorities like Ubungo may be more vulnerable to external changes and thus require flexible planning frameworks to adapt to policy shifts effectively. During the interview, interviewees shared the following insights:

*“Integrating strategic goals into daily operations is quite challenging. It’s difficult to see how these goals fit into the routine work processes, which often leads to confusion”* [Officer - DAWASA, 4th November, 2024]

*“External factors, like changes in government policies, have a significant impact on how we plan. These changes can disrupt our strategic direction and force us to adjust our plans constantly”* [Officer - Ubungo Municipality, 4th November, 2024]

*“Aligning our strategic goals with everyday tasks is something we struggle with. Often, there’s a gap between what’s planned and what we do on the ground”* [Officer - DAWASA, 4th November, 2024]

These findings suggest that integrating strategic goals with daily operations is a complex task that requires the attention of top leadership of an organization. This study has further noted that external factors, such as politics, and policy shifts after elections can disrupt the implementation of strategic planning, making it difficult for organizations to maintain consistent progress. Public organizations must always struggle to adapt to external changes of their environment so that they could enhance the overall success of strategic planning efforts.

#### 4. Discussion

The main objective of this paper was to examine factors affecting the implementation of strategic planning in the public sector in Tanzania, whereby the paper used two public organizations as its case study. As noted earlier, since the 1990s public organizations in Tanzania are required to adopt and use strategic planning as their management tools, and the expectation is that by now all public organizations in Tanzania will have developed sufficient experience to effectively implement strategic planning. It is however, noted in this paper that public organizations in Tanzania are still struggling to effectively implement their strategic planning. Our empirical data provided rich information about many factors that affect effective implementation of strategic planning in the public sector in Tanzania. Resources constraints and the poor alignment of the available resources with the planned performance objectives hinder the execution of strategic planning in the studied public organizations in Tanzania. Addition, bureaucratic processes and resistance to change as well as external political factors seem to affect the use of strategic planning in public organizations in Tanzania.

It should be noted that these factors seem to be not unique to the Tanzanian public sector. For instance Zaidi (2018) has argued that resources constraints and bureaucratic resistance have always the stumbling block of public sector reforms. Similarly, politics of public sector management can significantly affect the implementation of many aspects of public sector reforms. Some challenges of implementing strategic planning in Tanzania are also linked to institutional factors such poor accountability culture (Nnko, 2023) It is further noted that poor communication and weak alignment between available limited resources and planned activities are key features of public sector management (Ivančić *et al.*, 2021). Strengthening resource allocation against targeted plans of activities and enhanced communications as well as the engagement of employees in decision-making could foster a more supportive environment for the effective implementation of strategic planning in the studied organizations and in the entire public sector in Tanzania. As noted by Mailu *et al.* (2018) effective reform implementation demand fostering a culture of continuous learning and streamlining internal processes to enhance efficiency. Strengthening employee capacity through targeted training programs and ensuring that staff at all levels of organization are well-informed about strategic priorities and this can create a more cohesive and motivated workforce. Enhancing adaptability to external policy shifts through proactive planning and collaboration with relevant stakeholders could also ensure that public organizations such as DAWASA and Ubungo Municipality can sustain and ensure progress in implementing reforms even in dynamic public sector environments.

## V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Conclusion

The main conclusion of this study is that strategic planning is poorly implemented in the studied public organizations in Tanzania. Although public organizations in Tanzania are struggling to implement strategic planning, they failed to effectively implement this reform component. In this study, we have identified several factors affecting effective implementation of strategic planning in Tanzania. It is also observed in this study that the implementation of strategic planning has somehow improved how public organizations define their performance goals and this is a positive move in the right direction. It is, however, important to note that a lot of improvements are needed for public organizations in Tanzania to successfully implement strategic planning.

### 5.2 Recommendations

Given our research findings, several areas warrant further exploration to deepen our scholarly understanding of various dynamics of public sector management. Future research could expand the scope by examining a broader range of public organizations across different regions and sectors. This would allow for comparative analysis and provide insights into sector-specific challenges and best practices in improving public sector management. Additionally, exploring the influence of employee perceptions and engagement in the success of strategic planning could also reveal critical factors affecting its implementation. Furthermore, examining the effect of external environmental factors, such as political, economic, and social changes, on the effectiveness of strategic planning would offer valuable insights for public organizations aiming to develop adaptable and resilient strategies. At practice level, it is strongly recommended that public organizations should put in place strong mechanisms to monitor and evaluate their own performance.

### Declaration of Interest

The author declares that he does not have any known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

### Funding Declaration

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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