



The Influence of Workplace Culture on Organisational Performance: Experience from Tanzanian Public Sectors

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Abstract

Workplace culture remains a crucial catalyst for enhancing performance within public sector organisations. This paper examines the influence of workplace cultural traits on the performance of Tanzania's public sector institutions. It explores the prevailing workplace culture, highlights emerging trends, and addresses a significant gap in existing literature regarding cultural compatibility and organisational outcomes. The study specifically analyses practical experiences and insights on how workplace culture contributes to improved performance, while also identifying key factors that influence the accommodation of cultural values within Tanzanian public institutions. An integrative literature review (ILR) approach was adopted, encompassing five stages: problem identification, literature search, data evaluation, analysis, and presentation. Findings reveal that despite multiple reforms over the past three decades, public sector performance remains unsatisfactory, largely due to the misalignment between administrative controls, directives, and prevailing workplace cultural realities. This misalignment has weakened organisational commitment, reduced employee motivation, and undermined service delivery. Key factors identified for enhancing performance include ethical and transformational leadership, effective employee engagement, empowerment, fair remuneration, and alignment of organisational practices with workplace culture. The study concludes that fostering a positive and compatible workplace culture is essential for improving employee commitment, mitigating toxic work environments, and ensuring the effectiveness of institutional reforms and digitalised management systems such as PEPMIS. By integrating cultural understanding into organisational practices, public sector managers can enhance accountability, innovation, and overall performance.

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Introduction

In contemporary times, public sector managers are increasingly seeking effective management strategies, including the integration of workplace culture, to enhance organisational performance. Scholars assert that workplace culture is one of the most powerful tools available to management for improving performance (Vilcu et al., 2024). It has been further emphasised that workplace culture is a fundamental mechanism supporting the functioning of organisations and the achievement of both individual and institutional goals (Akpa et al., 2021). Given its importance, workplace culture should be prioritised within public organisations, as it fosters interaction, commitment, and collaboration among employees, ultimately contributing to improved performance and organisational growth (Bogale & Debela, 2024).

Despite global efforts to implement various reforms aimed at improving organisational performance, many institutions continue to experience underperformance in the face of an increasingly dynamic environment (Singogo & Mbeya, 2024). In particular, the performance of the public sector remains unsatisfactory, especially in areas such as financial management (Sandra & SeTin, 2023). Scholars argue that identifying and understanding workplace cultural traits provides a valuable mechanism for interpreting organisational dynamics and enhancing overall performance.

The performance of public sectors across African countries varies widely due to differences in cultural settings. Nonetheless, weak performance remains a common challenge among many African public institutions (Okeke-Uzodike & Chitakunye, 2014). Efforts to enhance public sector performance, therefore, require not only skilled human resources but also the recognition of appropriate workplace cultural traits underpinned by employee commitment. In Tanzania, as in many other nations, the public sector underwent major reforms from the 1980s to the 2000s following institutional crises. These reforms sought to improve efficiency and effectiveness in public service delivery through restructuring and the establishment of new systems, rules, and regulations intended to guide organisational behaviour and enhance performance (Singogo & Mbeya, 2024).

In response to persistent irregularities among public servants (URT, 2022), the government introduced several initiatives to promote ethical conduct and strengthen workplace culture. For example, legal frameworks were established to regulate unethical behaviour in the public service (Singogo & Mbeya, 2024). However, these mechanisms have not been adequately aligned with existing workplace cultures and have often been poorly enforced. To address such shortcomings, the government enacted the Public Leadership Code of Ethics Act in the late 1990s and introduced the Code of Ethics and Conduct for the Public Service in the early 2000s. Although these initiatives aimed to instil workplace culture in the public service, weak linkages between formal regulations and informal organisational norms have persisted. This disconnect has provided room for discretionary behaviour among public servants, thereby undermining performance. Furthermore, the current legal frameworks are characterised by multiple overlapping principles, delayed accountability processes, and complex regulations, all of which create confusion and hinder effective compliance. To overcome these challenges, recognising and embedding workplace culture within individual organisations becomes essential. Workplace culture encompasses both formal and informal aspects of the organisational environment, which together can influence behaviour, strengthen employee commitment, and enhance performance (Sandra & SeTin, 2023).



The rationale for this integrative review is to advance the theoretical, methodological, and practical understanding of workplace cultural traits in relation to public sector performance. The study assesses existing workplace culture practices in Tanzania's public sector, provides insights into emerging trends, and fills a critical gap in the literature. Specifically, it explores practical experiences and factors influencing the integration of workplace culture in improving public sector performance in Tanzania.

Literature review

Overview of workplace culture and cultural traits in the organisation

Workplace culture refers to the shared set of social beliefs, values, knowledge, behaviours, institutions, norms, attitudes, goals, and practices that characterise a particular organisation and distinguish it from others. It encompasses the collective way employees perform tasks and interact within an organisation, shaping the overall work environment (Sandra & SeTin, 2023). Research indicates that workplace culture plays a critical role in determining both employee and organisational performance (Ibrahim, 2023). A strong and positive workplace culture fosters engagement, collaboration, and a sense of belonging, creating an environment in which employees are motivated to perform at their best.

Scholars have described workplace culture as a powerful catalyst that drives organisational success by enhancing productivity, commitment, and innovation (Vilcu et al., 2024). When workplace culture aligns with organisational goals and employee expectations, it creates synergy that enables institutions to achieve sustained performance improvements. Therefore, it is imperative for public sector organisations to give deliberate attention to workplace culture, as it forms the foundation upon which employee attitudes, organisational practices, and long-term performance outcomes are built.

The roles of workplace culture on public sector performance

The extant literature identifies several workplace cultural traits that significantly influence organisational performance. One of the most frequently cited traits is employee engagement, which has a direct and positive impact on employee commitment and overall performance (Ujebe et al., 2023). Engaged employees are emotionally connected to their work and organisation (Algawazi et al., 2021), leading to stronger correlations between engagement, job satisfaction, commitment, and performance. Organisations that actively foster engagement across all levels tend to demonstrate higher levels of collaboration, innovation, and productivity.

Another key cultural trait is employee empowerment. Organisations that cultivate a culture of empowerment—where employees are trusted to make decisions and take ownership of their work—tend to perform better (Ujebe et al., 2023). Empowered employees experience a greater sense of competence and self-determination (Bagadood & Sulaimani, 2021), which positively influences their attitudes, behaviour, and performance outcomes (Yosinta, 2016). To achieve this, managers must ensure that organisational goals, missions, and visions are clearly communicated to build shared understanding and motivate employees to act with initiative and passion. A study by Matekele et al. (2025) revealed that despite extensive reforms, performance in Tanzania's Local Government Authorities (LGAs) remained low due to inadequate integration of workplace culture in project formulation, implementation, and evaluation processes (Lyawatwa & Tlegray, 2025).



Moreover, effective workplace cultures enhance psychological safety within organisations. When employees feel safe to express their opinions, share ideas, and raise concerns without fear of reprisal, the organisation benefits from increased creativity, innovation, and transparency (Kester et al., 2023). A culture that values open communication and trust nurtures positive work relationships and contributes to sustainable performance improvements (Algawazi et al., 2021).

Workplace culture also supports organisational governance and leadership by shaping managerial practices and employee behaviour. The extent to which managers empower, support, and interact with employees determines the strength and stability of an organisation's culture (Algawazi et al., 2021). A strong organisational culture consolidates shared values and beliefs, fostering the commitment and control necessary to achieve institutional objectives. According to Micheli (2008), organisational leaders must promote sustainable orientation, value creation, and the alignment of performance measurement with strategic cultural priorities across all levels of the organisation.

Overall, workplace culture plays an integral role in enhancing performance and effectiveness within both public and private organisations (Ibrahim, 2023). For public sector institutions, where bureaucratic processes often dominate, understanding and nurturing workplace culture is particularly critical. Effective leadership should therefore move beyond focusing solely on outcomes to building and sustaining a positive culture that empowers employees, encourages teamwork, and promotes continuous professional growth (Eshete & Birbirssa, 2024).

Methodology

This study adopted the Integrative Literature Review (ILR) approach as proposed by Whitemore and Knafl (2005), which allows for the synthesis of both empirical and theoretical evidence to generate a comprehensive understanding of a particular phenomenon. The ILR method was considered suitable for this study as it facilitates the integration of diverse sources of information, providing insights into workplace culture and its influence on organisational performance in Tanzania's public sector. The approach further enables the identification of knowledge gaps, informs current practices, and guides future policy directions. According to Whitemore and Knafl (2005), the ILR process comprises five systematic stages: problem identification, literature search, data evaluation, data analysis, and presentation.

In the first stage, the research problem was identified to establish the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the review, as recommended by Mather and Bam (2025). The guiding research question was developed using the PICOT framework, which ensures a focused and structured review process. Within this framework, P represented the population (public sector employees); I referred to the intervention (mechanisms, factors, and strategies influencing the utilisation of workplace culture to enhance performance); C denoted the context (Tanzania's public sector institutions); O signified the outcome (public sector performance); and T indicated the time frame (studies published between 2015 and 2025). The timeframe of 2015–2025 was deliberately chosen to ensure the contemporary relevance of the literature and to capture the most recent developments and trends in Tanzanian public sector workplace culture. This period reflects post-reform initiatives and contemporary studies on organisational performance.

A comprehensive literature search was conducted using databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and institutional repositories. Search terminologies included relevant keywords and Boolean combinations, such as: "workplace culture," "organisational performance," "public sector," "employee engagement," and "Tanzania." The search was limited to publications from 2015 to



2025 to ensure contemporary relevance and capture recent trends in Tanzanian public sector workplace culture.

The initial literature search yielded 92 studies, of which 20 duplicates were removed, resulting in 72 unique studies for screening. These studies were initially evaluated based on their titles and abstracts to determine their relevance to the study objectives, leading to the exclusion of 31 studies that did not adequately address workplace culture or public sector performance. The remaining 41 studies were subjected to a full-text assessment, from which 28 studies met all inclusion criteria and were selected for detailed review (see Fig. 1).

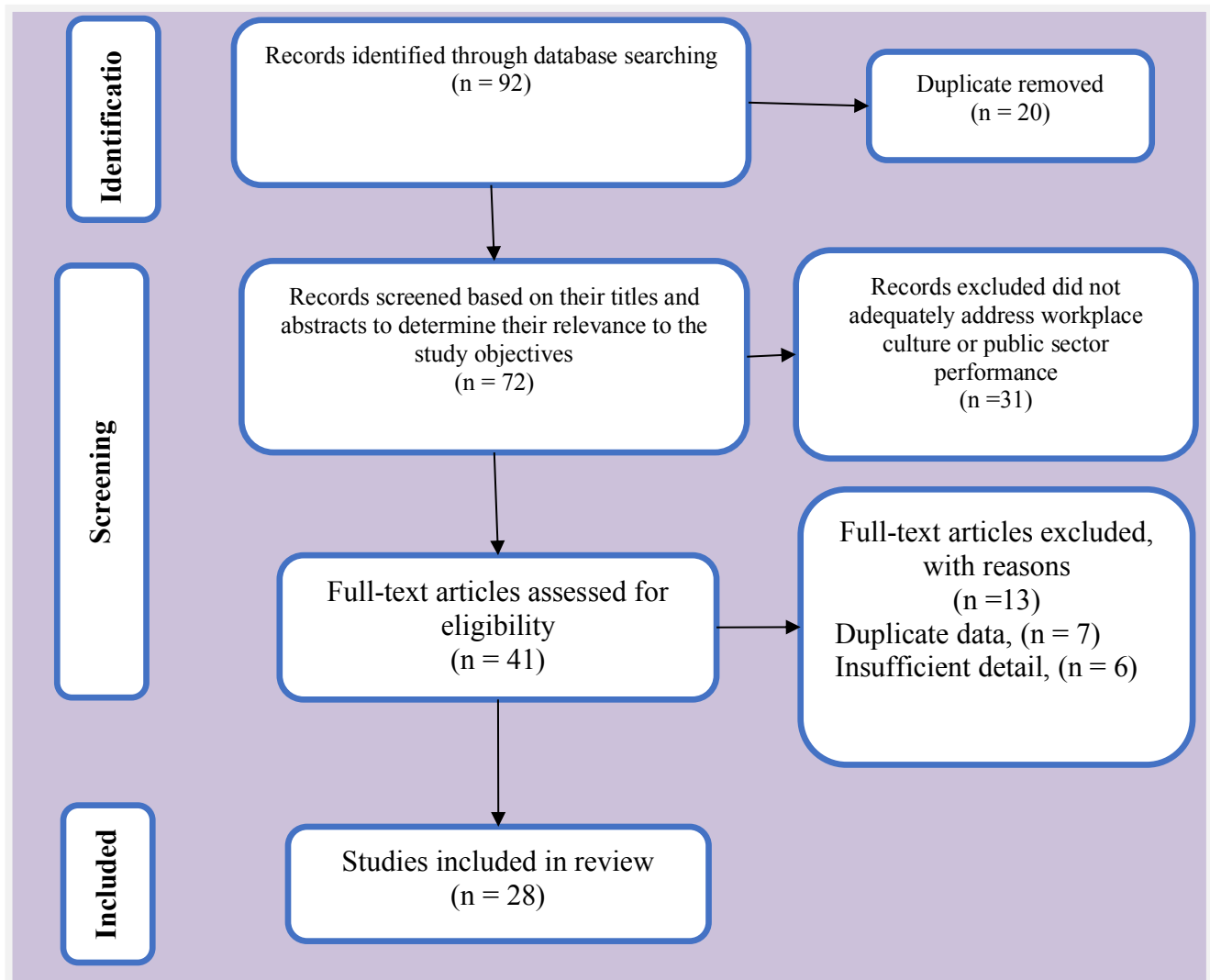


Figure 1: A PRISMA Flow Diagram

The inclusion criteria were carefully designed to ensure the quality, relevance, and applicability of the evidence to the Tanzanian public sector context. Selected studies were required to have clearly



defined research aims and objectives, employ methodologically sound approaches, and demonstrate relevance to the study topic, particularly the influence of workplace culture on organisational performance. Furthermore, studies were assessed for the consistency of results and the significance of their findings in relation to enhancing employee commitment, ethical conduct, and institutional performance. Publications outside the 2015–2025 timeframe or those failing to meet these criteria were excluded to maintain the contemporary relevance of the review and to ensure that the analysis reflects recent trends, reforms, and challenges in Tanzanian public sector institutions. This rigorous selection process allowed the study to synthesise robust, contextually relevant evidence, providing reliable insights into the role of workplace culture in shaping organisational outcomes.

Following data evaluation, the selected studies were systematically reviewed to identify key themes and sub-themes relevant to the research question. Each reviewer independently extracted data and categorised it under emerging thematic areas, after which the themes were compared, refined, and discussed until consensus was reached. A narrative synthesis technique was employed to integrate findings across studies, enabling a coherent summary of the evidence. Finally, the data were presented thematically, highlighting common patterns, divergences, and emerging trends across the reviewed literature. This process allowed for an in-depth understanding of how workplace culture influences organisational performance within Tanzania's public sector while also revealing critical gaps that warrant further research.

Findings and discussions

Tanzania public sector performance: Practical insights and experiences

Public sector performance is commonly understood as the output of public organisations in terms of the quantity and quality of services delivered to citizens (Yosinta, 2016). Improved public sector performance, therefore, entails the effective, efficient, and responsive delivery of public services. However, evidence from Tanzania indicates that the current working environment within public institutions often fails to accommodate essential workplace cultural traits. Core organisational norms, values, and attitudes appear to be weakening, as reflected in the growing number of reported cases of corruption, unethical conduct, poor customer service, and a general decline in employee morale (URT, 2022). The erosion of professional integrity and workplace discipline has contributed to a diminishing culture of accountability, further undermining the performance of the public sector.

Over the past three decades, public sector performance in Tanzania has remained unsatisfactory despite numerous reforms. A review of recent Controller and Auditor General (CAG) reports illustrates the extent of the challenge. For instance, the CAG's 2021/22 report on water supply services revealed persistent inefficiencies in service delivery, largely attributed to inadequate operational planning, poor billing systems, and limited infrastructure inspections. Of the eight Water Supply and Sanitation Authorities (WSSAs) assessed, only one fully utilised its installed infrastructure, while self-assessments were largely superficial and dependent on online reporting platforms that lacked comprehensive performance details. Furthermore, the Ministry of Water failed to conduct monitoring and evaluation exercises between 2019/20 and 2021/22, indicating serious institutional weaknesses (URT, 2022).

Similarly, in the education sector, while notable efforts have been made to enhance access and quality, several challenges persist. The CAG report identified issues such as inadequate monitoring



mechanisms, weak coordination among actors, ineffective reporting systems, and unrealistic planning and scheduling processes that continue to affect service delivery (URT, 2022). The report recommended strengthening coordination across all administrative levels and reinforcing performance monitoring and evaluation to ensure effective education service delivery.

Further insights from the Local Government Authorities (LGAs) highlight systemic governance and performance gaps. The CAG's 2020 report found that many LGAs had deviated from parliamentary decisions, legislative Acts, and government directives, undermining public service delivery and institutional performance. Of the 15 general recommendations issued in the previous audit, only 40 per cent were being implemented, 33 per cent had not been implemented at all, and 27 per cent had to be reiterated in the subsequent year's report (URT, 2022). Such limited compliance not only reflects weak accountability but also reveals an entrenched organisational culture that tolerates non-performance and disregard for regulatory frameworks.

If such practices persist, they risk becoming normalised within institutions, thereby damaging organisational reputation and diminishing the quality and quantity of public services delivered. The literature suggests that employees are more likely to perform effectively when supported by a strong and positive workplace culture that promotes accountability, commitment, and shared values (Algawazi et al., 2021). The CAG reports imply that the existing administrative controls and regulatory directives are often misaligned with the cultural realities of the LGAs. This lack of cultural compatibility weakens structural boundaries, erodes organisational commitment, and fosters behavioural tendencies that contradict institutional goals.

In response to performance challenges, the Tanzanian government has continued to implement various public sector transformation and reform initiatives aimed at improving efficiency and accountability. Yosinta (2016) emphasises that such reforms are crucial in aligning employee and organisational goals. One notable initiative is the introduction of the Public Employee Performance Management Information System (PEPMIS), designed to enhance efficiency in human resource management through digitalisation. PEPMIS is expected to address limitations observed in earlier systems, such as the Open Performance Review and Appraisal System (OPRAS) and the Integrated Personnel and Payroll System (IPPS), by providing timely access to employee data and management tools.

While the adoption of digital systems like PEPMIS represents a significant step towards improving performance management, their successful implementation depends heavily on cultural compatibility within public institutions. Without a deep understanding of organisational culture, such reforms risk creating toxic work environments that could harm employees' mental and physical well-being (Owoyemi & Ekwoaba, 2014; Dickson & Isaiah, 2024). Therefore, organisational culture remains a vital determinant of whether institutional changes lead to positive or adverse outcomes. As argued by Dickson and Isaiah (2024), workplace culture not only shapes performance outcomes but also provides a framework for assessing the appropriateness of reforms within specific organisational contexts.

Factors for accommodating workplace cultural for improved performance in Tanzania public sectors

Drawing from the preceding discussion, it is evident that ineffective communication, inadequate recognition, and perceived discrimination and inequality contribute to low employee morale and weaken compliance with internal control systems in Local Government Authorities (LGAs)



projects (Matekele et al., 2025). Masanja (2018) further observed that poor remuneration and a weak workplace culture are major factors influencing unethical behaviour among employees in LGAs. To address these challenges and foster a positive workplace culture that enhances organisational performance, several practical factors are worth considering.

First, transformational leadership is crucial in shaping organisational culture. According to Shahid (2024), transformational leaders play a vital role in influencing employees' behaviours, attitudes, beliefs, and values in a positive direction. Such leadership calls for a deliberate effort to improve remuneration structures, as employees are more likely to demonstrate integrity and commitment when they are compensated fairly. In this regard, LGAs should review and update salary scales to reflect the cost of living and levels of responsibility. Additionally, providing performance-based bonuses or rewards for ethical conduct can help reinforce positive behaviour. Transformational leaders must also ensure that salaries and allowances are paid promptly and distributed equitably. Beyond remuneration, leadership should integrate and align workplace culture with internal audit systems to promote transparency and accountability. Establishing safe reporting mechanisms for misconduct and open feedback channels for workplace concerns can further strengthen ethical practices and institutional trust (Bogale & Debela, 2024).

Second, the development of a positive and ethical work environment is essential for guiding employee behaviour. Public institutions can cultivate a strong ethical culture by having leaders who demonstrate integrity and set exemplary standards. This can be achieved through the formulation and enforcement of clear behavioural guidelines, coupled with continuous training on ethics, teamwork, and professional conduct. Ethical leadership, as emphasised by Serang et al. (2024), entails a strong concern for moral and ethical values within the workplace. When such values are communicated through open dialogue and applied equitably across all hierarchical levels, they foster employee engagement and enhance overall performance. Research further shows that ethical leadership reduces workplace misconduct and plays a critical role in achieving organisational goals. Public sector leaders must therefore address both moral and rational concerns to improve the quality of service delivery and strengthen societal trust. Leadership style significantly affects employee attitudes and commitment; hence, managers in public institutions should adopt leadership approaches that promote employee loyalty and organisational performance (Afrianty et al., 2025).

Third, employee motivation and engagement are central to sustaining a healthy workplace culture. Motivated employees are more likely to act responsibly and align their efforts with institutional goals. Motivation can take both monetary and non-monetary forms. According to Radu (2023), providing regular, constructive feedback and consistent recognition of employees' contributions are powerful mechanisms for enhancing morale and performance. Such practices not only improve employees' sense of value but also encourage them to take initiative and pursue personal and professional growth. Bogale and Debela (2024) support this view, asserting that timely and meaningful feedback equips employees to align their work with organisational priorities while fostering innovation and accountability.

Finally, creating a workplace culture that empowers employees is key to enhancing organisational performance. Empowerment allows staff to take ownership of their work, express ideas freely, and contribute meaningfully to decision-making processes. However, empowerment must be accompanied by improved working conditions, including adequate tools, safe offices, and



supportive infrastructure to sustain morale. As highlighted by Radu (2023), public sector organisations that invest significantly in employees' professional growth and learning not only cultivate a culture of high performance but also create an environment conducive to continuous improvement and adaptability.

In sum, the cultivation of a strong workplace culture within Tanzania's public sector requires transformational and ethical leadership, fair remuneration, effective communication, employee empowerment, and continuous capacity building. When these factors are systematically integrated into organisational practices, they can enhance employee satisfaction, reinforce ethical behaviour, and ultimately improve public sector performance.

Conclusion

This study examined the influence of workplace culture on public sector performance in Tanzania, drawing insights from existing literature, reports, and empirical evidence. The findings indicate that while public sector institutions contribute significantly to national development, their overall performance remains suboptimal due to weak workplace cultural traits. Key challenges identified include inadequate communication, poor employee engagement, lack of ethical leadership, weak compliance with internal controls, and limited empowerment of employees. Evidence from Tanzania's Local Government Authorities (LGAs), water supply services, and education sector highlights that these deficiencies not only undermine service delivery but also erode organisational integrity, accountability, and employee morale. The study concludes that workplace culture is a critical determinant of organisational performance in the public sector. Strong, positive, and ethical workplace cultures foster employee commitment, accountability, and innovation, all of which are essential for effective service delivery. Furthermore, workplace culture serves as a framework for guiding the outcomes of reforms and digitalised management systems, such as the Public Employee Performance Management Information System (PEPMIS), ensuring that institutional changes lead to meaningful improvements rather than unintended disruptions. Therefore, for reforms and policies to succeed, public sector managers must ensure alignment between organisational culture and institutional goals, promoting ethical conduct, empowerment, and employee engagement.

Policy implications

The findings of this study have several practical implications for improving public sector performance in Tanzania through workplace culture. First, public sector policies should prioritise the promotion of ethical and transformational leadership by training managers to demonstrate integrity, fairness, and accountability, while modelling behaviours aligned with organisational values. Second, policies must ensure that employee motivation and engagement are strengthened through fair and timely remuneration, performance-based incentives, and regular recognition of contributions. Providing constructive feedback and professional development opportunities can enhance employees' commitment and productivity. Third, the implementation of digitalised management systems, such as the PEPMIS, should be carefully aligned with the prevailing organisational culture to prevent resistance and foster positive adoption. Fourth, institutions should establish clear communication and feedback channels, coupled with safe mechanisms for reporting misconduct, to enhance transparency, accountability, and employee participation in organisational decision-making. Finally, workplace environments should be designed to empower employees by providing adequate resources, tools, and supportive infrastructure, enabling staff to take ownership of their work, contribute ideas, and innovate within their roles. By focusing on



these practical measures, policymakers and public sector managers can integrate workplace culture into institutional reforms and operational strategies, creating a motivated, accountable, and high-performing workforce capable of delivering quality public services efficiently and sustainably.

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