

## Local government leadership strategies in land dispute resolution: Insights from Buhigwe District, Tanzania

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<https://doi.org/10.51867/ajernet.6.4.53>

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### ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of local government leadership on resolving land conflict in Buhigwe District, Tanzania, a common form of social grievance and hindrance to development. Using transformational leadership theory as a theoretical lens for the study, a quantitative, positivist approach was applied, which involved surveys using structured questionnaires for the 259 participants. Both local leaders and community members were selected using stratified and simple random sampling. Leadership styles and land dispute resolution outcome were assessed using binary logistic regression. The findings indicate that community-based forms of leadership influence land conflict outcomes, particularly informal dialogue (AOR = 23.08, 95% CI: 6.27 - 84.94,  $p < 0.001$ ), negotiation (AOR = 17.68, 95% CI: 3.62 - 86.259,  $p < 0.001$ ), consultation (AOR = 10.30, 95% CI: 3.62 - 29.3,  $p < 0.001$ ), inclusive practices (AOR = 3.13, 95% CI: 1.37 - 7.12,  $p = 0.007$ ), community meetings (AOR = 2.69, 95% CI: 1.17 - 6.19,  $p = 0.019$ ) and awareness sessions (AOR = 19.79, 95% CI: 1.76 - 222.87,  $p = 0.016$ ) that all build trust, cooperation, and lasting peace in conflict situations. In the adjusted model, mediation and legal and administrative processes are not effective predictors, presenting possible limitations to their current implementation of these forms of conflict resolution. Overall, the study illustrates that local leadership is an effective avenue for dispute resolution; however, local actors should now be supported as a reflection of the principle of devolution through financial and technical capacity and national government support for local government actors. In order to strengthen local governance and achieve land justice in rural Tanzania, formal recognition of the customary authorities by the central government is further suggested, along with a more public dispute resolution protocol for investigations of local customary authorities.

**Keywords:** Land Conflict, Land Dispute Resolution, Local Government, Leadership Strategies

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Land disputes are becoming a major challenge throughout sub-Saharan Africa, resulting not only in a challenge to the socio-economic well-being of communities but also to the political and institutional stability of states (Bottazzi et al., 2016; Ringo, 2023; Asaaga, 2021). The emergence of land-related conflicts can be attributed to various factors that affect the entire region, such as rising populations and inflating land demands, weak or inadequate land tenure, competing land uses, and ineffective governance (Silva-Novoa Sánchez et al., 2025; Bottazzi et al., 2016; Kombe, 2010; Slesman et al., 2024). Tanzania is not an exception, conflicts between farmers and pastoralists as well as disputes about boundaries and conservation land, have resulted in land degradation, feelings of displacement, and even death. The frequency and increased intensity of land conflicts are emerging as a significant governance issue in districts such as Kiteto, Kilosa, and Ngorongoro (Ringo, 2023; John & Kabote, 2017; Rubakula et al., 2019; Benjaminsen et al., 2009).

Given the rise in land disputes, the government of Tanzania undertook important reforms in its land policy and legal framework to demonstrate recognition of the need for continuity in establishing an inclusive, deconcentrated land administration and conflict resolution system. The 1995 National Land Policy and subsequent enactment of the Land Act (No. 4) and Village Land Act (No. 5) in 1999 were key changes in Tanzania's land governance system. The legislation was aimed at better access to justice in rural areas, but also to streamline statutory and customary land tenure systems through the establishment of the Village Land Councils (VLCs) and Ward and District Land and Housing Tribunals (Massay, 2016; Ringo, 2023; Lugumiliza, 2022). These organs were meant to be accessible, cost-effective, and participatory compared to the formal legal justice system for the adjudication of land disputes in rural, disadvantaged settings in a timely manner (Biddulph & Hillbom, 2020; Rashid, 2021). In these decentralized systems, local government leaders (village chairpersons, ward executive officers, and ward council members) play an essential

role in the management of a land conflict. These leaders carry both legitimization by virtue of their position and recognition by their constituents, thus making them the first "go to" for disputants to seek mediation, a deliberative dialogue, and a pathway to settle amicably (Lugumiliza, 2022).

Even with the establishment of these decentralized mechanisms, land dispute resolution frameworks have remained uneven and often ineffective, with many of the anticipated reforms struggling to get beyond pilots or facing issues of lack of funds, training, coordination, and enforcement (John & Kabote, 2017). In addition, there is an increasing body of research identifying multiple drivers of continued and escalating land conflicts; these include a rapidly growing population, elite capture and corruption among local leaders, competing land uses, overlapping jurisdiction, and insufficient community participation in land-use planning (Saruni, 2018; Lawuo et al., 2014; Sanga & Moyo, 2018; Ringo, 2023). Local government organizational bodies, such as village and ward leaders, also face challenges in establishing legitimacy, neutrality, and effectiveness when mediating disagreements.

There has been extensive research on land dispute resolution mechanisms at the national or regional level, but there is less understanding of what takes place locally, or how effectively these leaders fulfill that role in practice. Specifically, it is not clear how local government leaders mediate and resolve land disputes. Local studies and empirical studies have paid little attention to this matter. Most of the published studies, such as Slesman et al. (2024), Lawuo et al. (2014), and Rubakula et al. (2019), focus mainly on legal-institutional settings or more general policy reviews at the macro-level, and we have little clear understanding about strategies used by local leaders on land conflict resolution and whether such strategies are effective. Furthermore, most previous studies discussed experiences in general across districts, rather than recognizing the distinct contextual experiences in local settings.

This study seeks to bridge this gap by focusing on Buhigwe District in western Tanzania, a rural area characterized by customary land tenure systems, pressures from cross-border migration, and inadequate institutional capacity to address issues surrounding land. The Buhigwe District also witnessed an increase in land disputes involving individuals, families, and communities. In this context, local government leadership, including village chairpersons, ward executive officers, and other community leaders, are important actors to prevent, mediate, and resolve disputes. However, there is little information about the strategies used and the influence of these strategies on land conflict resolution.

### **1.1 Research Objectives**

- i. To determine the leadership strategies employed by local government leaders in resolving land disputes in Buhigwe District.
- ii. To determine the influence of leadership strategies in land dispute resolution in Buhigwe District.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Theoretical Review**

Transformational Leadership Theory is based on the work of Burns (1978) and Bass (1985), offers an underlying model for analyzing leadership styles in the contexts of governance and conflict resolution. Instead of prioritizing exchanges between leaders and followers, as is the case with transactional leadership, transformational leadership emphasizes leaders' ability to impact, inspire, motivate, and mobilize people towards collective objectives. The theory identifies an overarching framework that consists of four core components: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Rather than consider the core components strictly as characteristics of leaders, each component can further be interpreted through these theoretical lenses as intentionally strategic performance benchmarks for leaders to reflect and orient towards a complex governance challenge.

Transformational leadership can provide a specific subset of strategic tools for local government officials to use in managing land disputes and reducing conflict. Land disputes, especially in rural or peri-urban contexts in Tanzania and elsewhere, emerge from entrenched historical, social, and economic tensions. Making sense of effective leadership in these situations implies the leader has gone beyond merely managing the setting and is actually attempting to strategically engage the communities affected by the land dispute. For example, a leader willing to demonstrate idealized influence can utilize trust-building methods of showing transparency, fairness and neutrality in a manner that is meaningful to the parties involved in a land dispute and increases their legitimacy. A leader may also use inspirational motivation strategically to develop a shared vision of a peaceful future for land use and community harmony and develop collective ownership over possible solutions (Ringo, 2023).

Intellectual stimulation allows leaders to question current dispute resolution practices and experiment with new mechanisms such as participatory land mapping or community-based adjudication. This is particularly important in contexts with no or little trust in formal legal systems. In this way, individualized consideration can be expressed through different strategies characterized by dialogue, inclusion, and context-specific solutions, which are all significant aspects of processes associated with sustainable peacebuilding (Ibrahim et al., 2022). Transformational

leadership theory offers an insightful and theoretical framework that describes how local leaders, through these different strategy applications, can influence processes and outcomes of land conflict resolution.

Moreover, the theory affirms that leadership can, in fact, be a fluid and responsive process that is responsive to the context. Land disputes in Buhigwe District, to take a conflict-sensitive example, might be cognized through ethnic, political, or resource-based identity categories (Deng et al., 2023); therefore, leadership approaches underpinned by transformational principles can more appropriately facilitate reconciliation and the longer-term themes of stability. When leaders activate communities to address grievances while establishing mechanisms for inclusive governance, resolution strategies can promote not only conflict resolution but also social cohesion and development.

## 2.2 Empirical Review

Empirical literature suggests that leadership strategies are central in navigating land disputes, especially in the presence of legal pluralism, tenure insecurity, and geopolitical fracturing. Ringo (2023) indicates that community involvement, attention to transparency, and facilitating strategic dialogues among stakeholders are key leadership methods for fostering trust, reducing disputant suspicion, and enhancing acceptance of land governance decisions. He points out that in cases where local leaders directly engage stakeholders who are affected, especially subjugated demographic groups such as women and pastoralism-conflict de-escalation is more workable, and representatives of disputing parties are more likely to uphold settlement agreements.

Muhoja and Lyakurwa (2025) concur, asserting that adaptive leadership approaches that embrace legal, customary, and community-based tenures are better able to navigate overlapping claims and historical grievances. His studies suggest that land conflict resolution ought to have an instituted authority, but should have leadership roles that include relational authorities based on empathy, patience, and cultural fluency. Asaaga (2021), working within a West African tenure approach, states that where leaders take the role of facilitators rather than enforcers of state policy, then a greater consensus can be built, especially where traditional norms intersect with formal adjudication methods.

Nevertheless, leadership strategies inherently fail or worsen tensions when they do not accommodate the local context. Tchatchoua- Djomo et al. (2020) point out that in contexts of extensive elite capture, leaders tend to align with powerful actors to undermine both equity and legitimacy. In a similar case, Van Leeuwen et al. (2022) emphasize the limitations of a top-down logic of leaders, illustrated by how formal land interventions do not recognize informal power structures, which, in situations of post-conflict or post-transition, may not resolve disputes or even create disputes.

Sefiw et al. (2025) pursue future directions by investigating leadership's ability to leverage digital innovations related to the participatory mapping and land information systems, among other innovations, as part of their "repertoire of strategies and tools". Their investigation suggests leaders have applied innovation in the digital dimension and increased the strategic contextualising of the technological innovations to map land boundaries and make land tenure claims, whereby the opportunity for antagonism is significantly lessened. This contributes to improved dispute resolution processes, but ultimately bolsters the formal land governance system by reducing ambiguities.

Ruppel and Leib (2022) recommend leadership as primarily working together across institutions on a more systematic basis. They insist that there is a lasting deadlock (or battle) between two or more parties; that these traditional leaders, officials, and judicial officers work in separate (maybe even antagonistic) spaces, thereby sustaining the deadlock (perhaps even overlapping roles or parallel decisions within them). They argue that it is important to establish leadership systems that encourage cooperation, coherence, and trust between institutions. Walwa (2017) adopts a more critical lens, and cautions that land use planning, while often claimed to be a neutral leadership approach, may be manipulated by political elites to accomplish dispossession of vulnerable communities. He implies that if actual community involvement does not happen in these plans, these plans can reflect the interest of powerful groups, instead of resolving conflict, they worsen the conflict as an institution.

Lastly, De Juan (2017) discusses the persistence of pre-colonial and customary dispute resolution practices, and associated them into contemporary leadership methods. He finds that in rural and post-conflict communities, traditional institutions can remain historically significant and visible venues for mediating dispute, as long as they are seen to be legitimate and actionable. However, his focus on issues of historical continuity and local legitimacy applies to how leadership is enacted in present day approaches to leadership.

In considering the nature of leadership within land conflict resolution processes, the research above illuminates the complexity of leadership. With considerations of effective engagement there are not only process questions, there are also relational questions that demand legitimacy of leadership, congruence with local customs, coherence across other actors and institutions, and adaptive and flexible leadership styles. In settings such as the Buhigwe District, where land is central to livelihoods, identity, and local political life, requires beyond inclusion in processes- capable leadership while seeking and achieving sustainable resolutions of land-based conflicts. For leaders to sustainably resolve and manage land conflicts, they have to incorporate technical knowledge, institutional relationships, and inclusive processes.



### III. METHODOLOGY

This study used a cross-sectional research design conducted between March and May 2025 to examine local government leadership strategies in land dispute resolution in Buhigwe District, Tanzania, which was appropriate to capture the complexity of land dispute resolution in a decentralized governance context. A cross-sectional design provided the opportunity to collect data at a single point in time from diverse stakeholders engaged in land governance. The cross-sectional approach made it possible to investigate ongoing leadership strategies, stakeholder interactions, and stakeholder perceptions of dispute resolution mechanisms as they were at the time of the study, without the manipulation of variables or introducing an intervention.

The cross-sectional design was ideal for capturing the complexity of land dispute resolution processes in a decentralized governance context. It provided the opportunity to assess the strategies used by different actors' Village chairpersons, Village Executive Officers (WEO), Vitongoji Chairpersons, and Ward Executive Officers (WEO) at the same time, thus enabling a synoptic assessment. This snapshot approach provided the opportunity to see the leadership strategies used and their influence on land conflict resolutions. The study was carried out in Buhigwe District, in the Kigoma Region of western Tanzania, an area known for a high rate of land disputes involving farmers, pastoralists, and local authorities. Buhigwe's rural nature, limited land resources, and reliance on agriculture is another reason for its appropriateness for this study on local government leadership concerning land governance.

The population of the study involved a total of 290 respondents, consisting of 44 village executive officers, 44 village chairpersons, 20 ward executive officers, and 182 Vitongoji chairpersons who were engaged in land conflicts in Buhigwe District. In this case, the diverse population helped to examine the strategies that leaders use, and how effective these strategies are in resolving land conflicts. The sample size for the study was calculated by using the Kothari (2004) formula, which is illustrated below:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 pqN}{e^2(N-1) + Z^2 pq}$$

Whereas: n: *the sample size for a finite population*

N: *size of population, which is the number of academic employees (290)*

P: *population reliability (or frequency estimated for a sample of size n), where p + q= 1*

e: *The margin of error considered is 2% for this study*

Z α/2: *normal reduced variable at 0.05 level of significance Z: is 1.96*

According to the above formula, the sample size for this study is:

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 0.02 \times 0.02 \times 290}{(0.02)^2 (290-1) + (1.96)^2 \times 0.02 \times 0.02}$$

n = 259

The proportional distribution of the sample size (n = 259) among the four population groups based on their share of the total population (N = 290), presented in table format:

**Table 1**  
*Sample Size Distribution*

| Group                      | Population (N) | Sample Size |
|----------------------------|----------------|-------------|
| Village Executive Officers | 44             | 39          |
| Village Chairpersons       | 44             | 39          |
| Ward Executive Officers    | 20             | 18          |
| Vitongoji Chairpersons     | 182            | 163         |
| <b>Total</b>               | <b>290</b>     | <b>259</b>  |

This study used a combination of stratified sampling and simple random sampling methods to achieve a representative and balanced selection of the respondents at all administrative levels and leadership functions concerning land dispute resolution in Buhigwe District. The use of stratified sampling allowed the researcher to place the population into four distinct strata based on respondents' positions (WEO, VEO, Vitongoji chairpersons and Village chairpersons). It was necessary to employ stratified sampling to ensure that the sampling selection would have adequate representation for each category of leadership that represented different levels of authority and responsibility in the land governance system. Stratification of the sampling was warranted because of the varying functions played by the selected groups involved in the process of dispute resolution. For example, the VEOs and WEOs serve as administrative officers while the Chairpersons (at the village and vitongoji level) are elected representatives who directly interact with local members of the community. As such, stratifying the sampling method was

important to capture the understanding of groups with governance responsibilities. Within each stratum, a simple random sampling method was utilized to select individual respondents. This approach was utilized to remove selection bias to ensure that each member of the sample stratum had an equal probability of being included in the sampling. A random number generator was utilized to draw names from official lists provided by the Buhigwe District Council. This enhanced the internal validity of the results through the minimization of systematic exclusion or overrepresentation of specific individuals or subgroups. The sampling protocol also aimed to achieve a well-above-average sampling ratio to enhance the credibility of the findings.

A questionnaire was the main data collection tool used in this study to collect data from local government leaders who were part of the land dispute resolution process in Buhigwe District. The use of a questionnaire was methodologically justified based on the need to systematically collect standardized data from a relatively large and geographically dispersed group of respondents ( $n=259$ ), namely Village Executive Officers, Village Chairpersons, Ward Executive Officers, and Vitongoji Chairpersons.

The questionnaire was an appropriate data collection method for this study for at least three reasons. To begin with, it allowed the researcher to easily collect quantitative data from a relatively large number of respondents in a short time frame, consistent with the research's cross-sectional design. Second, the questionnaire generated consistency in terms of the respondents' experiences, since all of the participants would be asked the same form of questions, which is important to the reliability of their answers and comparisons across administrative levels and roles. Considering that the participants had a variety of educational and managerial backgrounds, the questionnaire was structured to be clear, concise, and relevant to the context, with closed-ended questions. Closed-ended questions provided structured responses that could later be quantitatively tested to highlight the patterns and trends of leadership strategies, coordination practices, and perceived effectiveness of dispute resolution processes. To establish validity and reliability, the questionnaire was pre-tested with a small group of respondents ( $n=10$ ) that was not part of the sample for this study, and changes were incorporated based on the feedback given to improve clarity, remove ambiguity, and align the instrument with the objectives of the study.

Prior to analysis, the collected data underwent a series of coding and cleaning to ensure accuracy and consistency. This included checks for missing values, outliers, and any inconsistencies in the responses. Once cleaned, the data were analyzed using statistical software. The first step to analyze the data was utilizing descriptive statistics to summarize and describe the different leadership strategies used by local leaders in land conflict resolution and to describe the challenges local leaders faced in resolving land conflicts. Frequencies and percentages were calculated to describe the prevalence and distribution of respondents' leadership strategies, including negotiation, mediation, community meetings, and inclusive approaches; this was also to give the reader a clear understanding of the practices that have been adopted to resolve land disputes. Data analysis in this study included bivariate and multivariate logistic regression to explore the nature of the relationships between leadership strategies and land conflict resolution outcomes thoroughly. At the outset, bivariate analysis was conducted to explore the association between each independent variable (i.e. community meetings, mediation, negotiation, and awareness sessions) and the dependent variable, which was the effectiveness of land dispute resolution.

This analysis also identified which leadership strategies were significantly associated with conflict resolution outcomes. Then, to address the joint influence of multiple leadership approaches when examining land conflicts the research utilized multivariate analysis (binary logistic regression), adjusting for possible confounding variables. This approach generated adjusted odds ratios, which revealed the relevance and significance of each approach when examined concurrently. Thus, using both bivariate and multivariate analysis, the study conveyed a strong representation of how leadership approaches do not function independently, and thus, provide depth and quality to the research findings. This research adhered to rigorous ethical considerations to protect and respect all participants throughout the research study. Informed consent was obtained before data collection from each respondent, who received information regarding the study's purpose, procedures involved, and their ability to withdraw at any time without consequence. Confidentiality and anonymity were observed through the allocation of codes to participants, instead of their personal identifiers, and we took measures to secure data (usage of password-protected devices) to avoid unauthorized access. Participation was strictly voluntary and not coerced or influenced inappropriately. The study also respected cultural sensitivities and local customs, especially when the possible subject matter of the study involved a sensitive discussion around land disputes. Ethical clearance was requested and granted by Buhigwe district council. As a whole, these factors maintain that this research was conducted responsibly to respect participants' rights and allow for the trustworthiness of the research findings.

## IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The demographic information of the participants indicates a very diverse and representative sample from the Buhigwe District community, which is relevant for a land conflict study. Female respondents make up the most represented demographic at 62.8%, which perhaps illustrates their predominance in leadership and land matters. Individuals of varied ages were present, which is to be expected of a study obtaining a wide range of ages, spanning young adults (18-24) through to older members of the community (55+ years). The age distribution further illustrates the impact of land issues across the whole age spectrum. The greatest representation of people was obtained from participants who were married (64%), which is significant regarding communal household and kin structure in relation to land conflict. Respondents were also well educated, including a significant proportion who received secondary (40.7%) and tertiary education (27.1%). Educated individuals may illustrate a greater capacity for involvement in conflict resolution. Farming proved to be the most common activity (33.3%) which is indicative of the importance of land as a source of livelihood in this rural context.

In addition, the individuals in the study differed by how long they had lived in Buhigwe: less than five years, and greater than twenty years, which displayed a veteran community member as well as newcomers and all caucus perceptions of property

and legitimacy. Especially important, not one of the individuals in the study claimed never having been in a land dispute, either as a disputant, mediated, or a bystander, which underscored the presence of land disputes in the community. The broad range of respondents' experiences would help the data analysis in showing the possibilities of a range of local leaders' strategies and how the model could be successful in land disputes while emphasizing either of the local context and inclusive process as a technique of dispute strategies.

**Table 2***Demographic Characteristics of Respondents*

| Variable                                       | Category            | Frequency (n) | Valid Percent (%) |
|--|---------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Gender   | Male                | 162           | 62.8              |
|  | Female              | 96            | 37.2              |
| Age Group                                      | 18–24               | 56            | 21.7              |
|  | 25–34               | 49            | 19.0              |
|  | 35–44               | 52            | 20.2              |
|  | 45–54               | 43            | 16.7              |
|  | 55+                 | 58            | 22.5              |
| Marital Status                                 | Single              | 29            | 11.2              |
|  | Married             | 165           | 64.0              |
|  | Divorced            | 26            | 10.1              |
|  | Widowed             | 38            | 14.7              |
| Education Level                                | No Formal Education | 60            | 23.3              |
|  | Primary             | 23            | 8.9               |
|  | Secondary           | 105           | 40.7              |
|  | Tertiary            | 70            | 27.1              |
| Occupation                                     | Business            | 73            | 28.3              |
|  | Farming             | 86            | 33.3              |
|  | Employed            | 52            | 20.2              |
|  | Unemployed          | 36            | 14.0              |
|  | Other               | 11            | 4.3               |
| Years of Residency                             | <5 Years            | 50            | 19.4              |
|  | 5–10 Years          | 94            | 36.4              |
|  | 11–20 Years         | 71            | 27.5              |
|  | >20 Years (4)       | 43            | 16.7              |
| Have you ever been involved in a land dispute? | Yes (1)             | 258           | 100.0             |
| If yes, what was your role?                    | Disputant           | 79            | 30.6              |
|  | Mediator            | 93            | 36.0              |
|  | Witness             | 86            | 33.3              |

**4.2 Leadership Strategies Employed by Local Government Officials in Resolving Land Disputes**

The study examines the impact of leadership strategies employed by local authorities in resolving land conflicts in the Buhigwe Kigoma region. Through descriptive statistics, respondents evaluated the leadership strategies by answering yes or no to a series of questions. Results are detailed in Table 3. The study examined the leadership strategies used on land conflict resolution in the Buhigwe Kigoma region, based on responses from 259 participants. Key findings indicate that a majority (66.4%) of respondents viewed community meetings as ineffective for land conflict resolution. However, negotiation and community mediation were favoured by 77.2% and 96.7% of respondents, respectively. Overall, 68.7% supported community engagement as a strategy, suggesting local leaders utilize it to address land conflict in the region.

Additionally, questions were asked regarding the utilization of legal and administrative strategies as a means to resolve land conflicts. The findings suggest that among 259 respondents, 159 individuals responded "no" to using legal and administrative procedures, equating to almost 61.4% of respondents, compared to 100 (38.6%) that did agree. These results imply that several respondents did not seem to highly value legal and administrative processes as a strategy for land conflict resolution. The follow-up question asked whether informal dialogue was also a strategy of conflict resolution regarding their land conflict. With regard to informal strategies, 180 (69.5%) of respondents agreed with the strategy amongst the yes respondents, and 79 (30.5%) said no in relation to the disagreeing participants. The data shows this in Table 4.2. When discussing inclusivity types of strategies to land conflict resolution, as indicated in the results, 253 (97.7%) agreed that this is a method in which all parties involved with the land conflict are invited to participate in the conflict resolution approach (see Table 3).

**Table 3***Leadership Strategies Employed by Local Government Leaders*

| Variable                            | 1=Yes       | 0 = No      | Mean | Std. Dev. |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|------|-----------|
| Community Meeting                   | 87 (33.6%)  | 172 (66.4%) | 0.66 | 0.473     |
| Consultation                        | 81 (31.3%)  | 178 (68.7%) | 0.69 | 0.465     |
| Mediation                           | 197 (76.1%) | 62 (23.9%)  | 0.24 | 0.428     |
| Negotiation                         | 200 (77.2%) | 59 (22.8%)  | 0.23 | 0.420     |
| Awareness sessions                  | 251 (96.9%) | 8 (3.1%)    | 0.03 | 0.173     |
| Inclusive approaches                | 253 (97.7%) | 6 (2.3%)    | 0.02 | 0.151     |
| Legal and administrative procedures | 159 (61.4%) | 100 (38.6%) | 0.39 | 0.488     |
| Informal dialogue                   | 180 (69.5%) | 79 (30.5%)  | 0.31 | 0.461     |

**4.3 Logistic Regression Model fit Statistics**

The results of the logistic regression model fit statistics are presented in Table 4. The Omnibus Test of Model Coefficients generated a chi-square value of 183.453 with degrees of freedom (df) 8, yielding significance  $p < .001$ . This indicates that the predictors in the model predicted as a set significantly better than the base (or null) model and that the independent variables together explained variance in the dependent variable. Additionally, the Hosmer and Lemeshow Test for evaluation of goodness-of-fit assessment resulted in a chi-square value of 13.414 and df 7 at significance  $p = .063$ . Since the p-value is greater than the conventional cut-off of  $p < 0.05$ , the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. The null hypothesis states that there is no difference between observed values and predicted values. Thus, this further indicates that the model fits the data well and does not exhibit poor specification. The -2 Log Likelihood score of 173.181 is lower than expected, meaning a better-fitting model, which is helpful in this research, as the smaller numbers signify a model that fits the outcome variable better. The Cox & Snell  $R^2$  of 0.508 and the Nagelkerke  $R^2$  of 0.679 suggest the model has explained 50.8%-67.9% of the dependent variable's variance. The model vs unadjusted  $R^2$  (the Nagelkerke  $R^2$ ) shows strong explanatory power associated with the model in terms of social science.

**Table 4***Logistic Regression Model Fit Statistics*

| Test Component                     | Statistic / Value        | df | Sig. | Interpretation                                   |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|----|------|--|
| Omnibus Test of Model Coefficients | $\chi^2 = 183.453$       | 8  | .000 | Model significantly improves fit over null model |
| Hosmer and Lemeshow Test           | $\chi^2 = 13.414$        | 7  | .063 | Indicates good fit ( $p > 0.05$ )                |
| -2 Log Likelihood                  | 173.181                  |    |      | Lower values suggest better model fit            |
| Cox & Snell $R^2$                  | 0.508                    |    |      | Indicates moderate explanatory power             |
| Nagelkerke $R^2$                   | 0.679                    |    |      | Indicates strong model performance               |
| Estimation Iterations              | Converged at iteration 6 |    |      | Parameter estimates changed by $< 0.001$         |

**4.4 The Influence of Leadership Strategies on Land Conflict Resolution**

This study examined the role of leadership by local government officials in resolving land disputes in Buhigwe district, Tanzania. Among the range of leadership strategies examined, informal dialogue was found to influence land dispute resolution the most. In the bivariate analysis, the use of informal dialogue by local leaders was about 43.758 times more likely to influence land dispute resolution (OR, 43.758, CI 13.274-144.248,  $p = 0.000$ ). In the multivariable model, the use of informal dialogue was about 23.084 times more likely to influence land dispute resolution (OR, 23.084, CI 6.273-84.938,  $p = 0.000$ ), controlling for other leadership interventions, including Community meetings, consultations, awareness sessions, legal and administrative categories, and negotiation.

Negotiation was found to be the second most influential leadership strategy in land dispute resolution among the interventions analyzed. In the multivariable analysis, the use of community negotiation by local leaders was about 17.7 times more likely to influence land dispute resolution (OR, 17.684, CI 3.625-86.256,  $p = 0.000$ ), controlling for community meetings, consultations, awareness sessions, informal dialogue, as well as other leadership strategies. The use of community negotiation significantly influenced land dispute resolution, and the bivariate model found that local leaders who used community negotiation were about 24.7 times more likely to influence land dispute resolution (OR, 24.744, CI 7.492-81.724,  $p = 0.000$ ). Overall, of all the conflict resolution interventions assessed, negotiation had the most significant effect on increasing the probability of achieving the intended outcome.

Three leadership strategies, including awareness sessions (OR, 2.537, CI 0.502-12.811,  $p = 0.016$ ), consultations (OR, 6.645, CI 3.662 - 12.058,  $p = 0.000$ ), and community meetings (OR, 2.275, CI 1.345 - 3.849,  $p = 0.019$ ), were statistically significant and, therefore, considered to be associated with land conflict resolution. However, other leadership strategies, specifically Legal and administrative procedure (OR, 1.667, CI 0.300 - 9.264,  $p = 0.459$ )

and Mediation (OR, 8.361, CI 3.780 - 18.493,  $p = 0.120$ ) were statistically insignificant factors associated with land conflict resolution as shown by both bivariate and multivariate analysis.

**Table 4**

*The Influence of Leadership Strategies on Land Conflict Resolution*

| Variable                            | Unadjusted OR | 95% CI (Unadj.)  | p-value (Unadj.) | Adjusted OR | 95% CI (Adj.)   | p-value (Adj.) |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|------------------|------------------|-------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Community Meeting                   | 2.275         | 1.345 – 3.849    | 0.002            | 2.694       | 1.173 – 6.187   | 0.019          |
| Consultation                        | 6.645         | 3.662 – 12.058   | 0.000            | 10.304      | 3.623 – 29.307  | 0.000          |
| Mediation                           | 8.361         | 3.780 – 18.493   | 0.000            | 2.506       | 0.788 – 7.973   | 0.120          |
| Negotiation                         | 24.744        | 7.492 – 81.724   | 0.000            | 17.684      | 3.625 – 86.256  | 0.000          |
| Awareness sessions                  | 2.537         | 0.502 – 12.811   | 0.260            | 19.787      | 1.757 – 222.868 | 0.016          |
| Legal and administrative procedures | 1.667         | 0.300 – 9.264    | 0.559            | 2.814       | 0.182 – 43.539  | 0.459          |
| Inclusive approaches                | 6.258         | 3.488 – 11.228   | 0.000            | 3.126       | 1.373 – 7.119   | 0.007          |
| Informal dialogue                   | 43.758        | 13.274 – 144.248 | 0.000            | 23.084      | 6.273 – 84.938  | 0.000          |

The regression results confirm that leadership strategies influence land conflict resolution in Tanzania. Leadership strategies with the highest statistical significant with the highest likelihood of an outcome is consultation, with an adjusted odd ratio (AOR) of 10.304 (95% CI: 3.623–29.307,  $p = 0.000$ ), meaning that if consultation is pursued, there is a much greater chance that land conflict will be resolved. This corroborates findings from Ibrahim et al. (2022) that trust in local actors increased and legitimacy was provided to existing resolution mechanisms because of more consultative participation.

In like manner, informal dialogue had the strongest effect, with an adjusted odd ratio (AOR) of 23.084 ( $p = 0.000$ ). This highlights the significance of culturally-contextualised, everyday forms of communication, consensus, and conflict resolution. This is especially true for rural locations where access to a formal legal institution is problematic, seen as untrustworthy, or not adopted by the local populace. Informal dialogue is based on social norms and acknowledges the traditions that empower different members of the community to participate, and are viewed by community members as legitimate and trustworthy. As a result, informal dialogue may serve as a basis for customary justice that operates parallel, or as a substitute, to legal regimes across the globe. Informal approaches contribute to mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence among people living in regions of land disputes and natural protected areas (Muhoja & Lyakurwa, 2025b)

Negotiation was also an underlined theme with a statistically significant association ( $p = 0.000$ ), with an adjusted odd ratio (AOR) of 17.684, further supporting Ringo's (2023) idea that negotiation is a frontline strategy used by village land councils to manage conflicts before they escalate. Mediation had a very strong statistically significant association in the unadjusted analysis (OR = 8.361,  $p = 0.000$ ), although it was not statically significant in the adjusted analysis (AOR = 2.506,  $p = 0.120$ ). This may suggest that although mediation is inherently normal, context matters, or the extent to which mediation was possible was contingent on other intervening variables, such as power or trust in the institutions (Tchatchoua-Djomo et al., 2020)

Public awareness sessions, in contrast to the other themes, had a low unadjusted association (OR = 0.282,  $p = 0.071$ ) but was also statistically significant in the adjusted analysis (AOR = 19.787,  $p = 0.016$ ), indicating that, controlling for other variables, public awareness issues were an important contributor to resolving issues around land rights in local contexts. Additionally, there were no statistically significant relationships found for the themes of legal approaches or administrative processes (AOR = 2.814,  $p = 0.459$ ). This supports Walwa (2017) assertion that while legal approaches are important, they do not produce results that are timely, or just by virtue of their legal status related to reality on the ground, particularly with contested claims across land tenure regimes, or where dispossession is non-equitable.

Moreover, the inclusive approaches revealed a statistically significant positive result (AOR=3.126,  $p=0.007$ ), which indicates worth for working with the parties to the dispute. This is supported by the work of Rubakula et al. (2019) in their study of inclusive action in Kigoma that sought to demonstrate legitimacy and compliance through customary practice, as well as working with communities. Community meetings as a theme being statistically

significant (AOR=2.694,  $p=0.019$ ) further supports Muhoja & Lyakurwa, (2025) position that these are also a way to diffuse tensions, which creates an opportunity to engage, although they were valued less than the inclusive approaches.

Therefore, the evidence presented suggests that place-based, participatory, and dialogue-based responses are not only culturally relevant but statistically effective means of addressing land disputes. It underscores the necessity for improvement via informal, inclusive approaches, at the same time; the formal law continues to evolve. The evidence presented also encourages researchers and practitioners to rethink tradition by intentionally shifting their land governance approach from a dominant bureaucratic or top-down land tenure system to methods that are community-centered based on trust, equity, and access, emphasized by van Zeng et al. (2024) and Bottazzi et al. (2016).

## V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Conclusion

This article presents a locally-grounded approach to the leadership strategies for land dispute resolution in rural contexts. The strategies highlighted within this article showed that informal discussions emerged as the most effective strategy used: affirming the significance of culturally-grounded approaches for dispute resolution. Negotiation and consultation strategies were also effective, underscoring the importance of process and participation in local settings. Conversely, formal processes related to law and administration were less effective, revealing that institutional processes had low accessibility, responsiveness, and legitimacy in aiding land dispute resolution in this context. Community ownership-oriented strategies, which include inclusive strategies, community meetings, and awareness building, were also effective in land dispute resolution and are indicative of the necessity of socially legitimate processes that are contextually appropriate and acceptable. Collectively, these findings demonstrate an obligation for public administrators and development practitioners to recognize, adopt and promote indigenous and informal processes in larger land governance structures. Both adopting and recognizing locally-based processes not only enhance efforts to resolve disputes, but build local ownership, trust and ultimately social cohesion for the long term.

### 5.2 Recommendation

The findings of this study suggest that approaches based on informal and community-based processes need to be more explicitly included in formal land governance and conflict resolution systems. Public administrators and development practitioners need to sunder as an objective to inform and transform the locally validated elements of informal dialogue, consultation and negotiation by recognizing its legitimacy and facilitating institutionalization. Attention needs to be placed on integrating informal responses with broader governance arrangements to ensure informal approaches are complementary rather than in competition to the existing formal legal regime. In addition, efforts to support facilitation and community based leadership at the local level need to incorporate informal and community-based processes taking into account the social and cultural characteristics of the community. Building trust through transparency, accountability and culturally-appropriate protocols is important as is embedding all interventions into the local historical and social textile of land relations. Finally, the potential for strategies to be effective and sustainable can be strengthened through increasing community capacity through legal literacy and civic education to raise awareness.

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