



## Organisational leadership style and its influence on the ability to undertake strategic public relations practice in Tanzania's commercial banks

Prudence Pastory Rwehabura 

*The University of Dodoma*

*Kamfipo Gidion Mwakitalu*

*University of Dar es Salaam*

### ABSTRACT

This study, conducted in selected banking institutions in Tanzania, examined how transformational and transactional organisational leadership styles influence the ability of public relations (PR) personnel to undertake strategic public relations practice. Guided by an interpretivist research philosophy, the study used a qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews involving chief executive officers, PR officers, human resource directors, and marketing directors selected purposively. Findings revealed that organisational leaders relied mainly on transactional leadership behaviours to enhance PR personnel's day-to-day performance. However, these behaviours provided limited motivation for PR practitioners aiming to develop and apply strategic communication competencies. Heavy dependence on directives, reward mechanisms, and task-centred supervision constrained opportunities for PR personnel to participate meaningfully in strategic planning and decision-making processes. The paper recommends that bank leaders adopt more positive and participatory leadership behaviours, particularly by engaging PR personnel in planning and implementing strategic communication tasks. It further proposes that leaders strike a balance between transactional and transformational leadership approaches to reduce the negative consequences of overreliance on either style. Such a balance would strengthen strategic public relations practice, support professional growth, and enhance overall organisational effectiveness.

### ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 11 July 2025

Accepted 22 October 2025

### KEYWORDS

Leadership style behaviours, organisational leadership style, strategic public relations practice, transformational leadership style, transactional leadership style

### HOW TO CITE

Rwehabura, P. P. & Mwakitalu, K. G. (2025). Organisational leadership style and its influence on the ability to undertake strategic public relations practice in Tanzania's commercial banks. *East African Journal of Communication Studies*, Vol. 1(1), 102-128. <https://doi.org/10.56279/eajocs.v1i1.5>

## **Introduction**

Strategic public relations (henceforth PR) practice refers to proactive, purposeful, and planned communication programmes and campaigns designed to help the organisation meet its overall strategy (Tench & Yeomans, 2017). The PR personnel should demonstrate certain abilities to succeed in performing job-related tasks when demonstrating strategic PR practice in organisational settings. Without exhibiting these abilities, it becomes impractical for the PR personnel to communicate activities in the overall vision at both organisational and departmental levels (Harrison & Mühlberg, 2014). The literature recommends such abilities as the capacity to own the organisational communication vision, the ability to improve PR work performance, the ability to attain job innovation and creative attitudes in PR, the ability to realise good communication interrelationship with the top leaders, and the ability to demonstrate all levels of work place commitment (Men & Stacks, 2013). To realise these abilities, however, depends on, among other factors, the existing organisational leadership style, namely transformational and transactional, as well as the related leadership style behaviours (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016). Backing up this is an argument that strategic PR practice is a complex and dynamic process of building good relationships between the organisation and its strategic stakeholders (Wilcox, Cameron & Reber, 2015).

Organisational leadership style refers to the purposeful means by which a leader influences subordinates to pursue the future organisational state that intends to change the present one (Gandolfi & Stone, 2017). Organisational leadership style subdivides into two categories: transactional and transformational leadership styles. As Amirul and Daud (2012, p. 193) point out, these two leadership styles: “form a new paradigm for understanding both the lower and higher order effects of leadership styles”, hence shaping earlier leadership types that have existed for the past half a century. The transactional leadership style is the one in which a leader promotes compliance of his or her followers, in this case, the PR personnel, through rewards and punishments. The style embraces *command-and-*

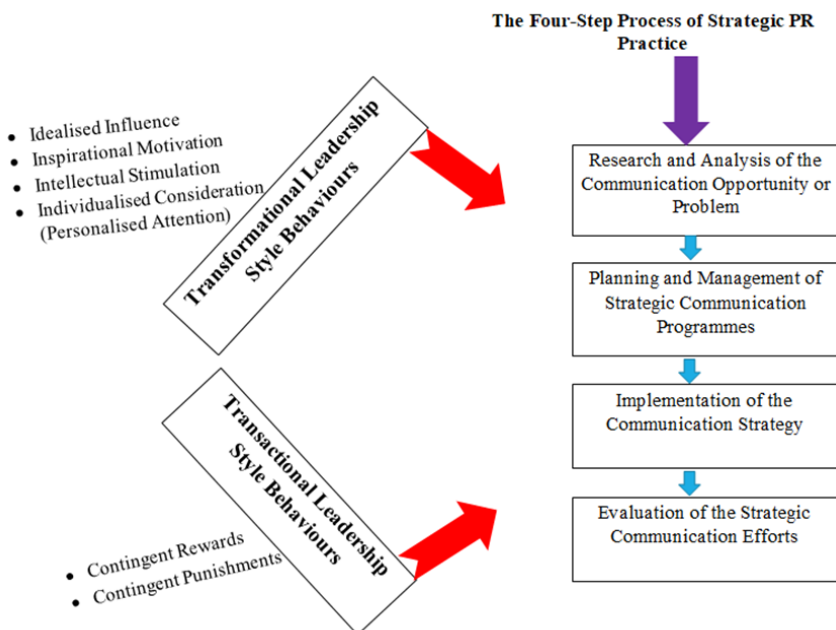
*control* and *empower-and-track* leadership models (Gandolfi & Stone, 2017). According to Kark, Dijk, and Vashdi (2017), the followers' motivation in this leadership style relies on doing as per the leader's expectations to avoid punishment or disciplinary actions, focusing on gaining praise or reward. The transactional leadership style behaviours are contingent rewards and contingent punishments (Birasnav, 2013). In contrast, the transformational leadership style is the one in which the leader raises the followers' awareness of the importance of desired organisational outcomes and how to reach such outcomes (McCleskey, 2014). Different from transactional leaders who emphasise the role of rules, standards, and power in organisations, the transformational leader embraces the *connect-and-nurture* leadership model (Gandolfi & Stone, 2017) because he or she is "relationship-oriented, interactive, visionary, passionate, caring, and empowering" (Yue, 2019, p. 4). The transformational leadership style behaviours are, namely, idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration (personalised attention) (Garg and Ramjee, 2013).

While much PR research has underscored the importance of organisational leader-PR personnel fit in affecting organisational outcomes (Heath, 2013; Macnamara & Gregory, 2018; Seitel, 2017; Yue, 2019), the specific empirical literature that explains how organisational leadership style shapes or affects the abilities of the PR personnel to undertake strategic PR practice in the context of Tanzania are not addressed. Anani-Bossman (2020) accurately asserts that, though PR has grown remarkably since the early 2000s in the African continent (of which Tanzania is a part), there are few scholarly studies regarding PR practice. To fill this gap, this paper investigated the extent to which the organisational leadership style influenced the ability of the PR personnel to undertake strategic PR practice in the context of selected banking institutions in Tanzania.

Thus, the following question guided the study:

To what extent does the organisational leadership style influence the ability of the PR personnel to undertake strategic PR practice in the context of commercial banks in Tanzania? This main question had five sub-questions that formed the content of the study. These questions were as follows:

- (i) What is the influence of idealised influence on the PR personnel’s ability to own the organisational communication vision?
- (ii) What is the influence of inspirational motivation on the PR personnel’s ability to improve PR work performance?
- (iii) What is the influence of intellectual stimulation on the PR personnel’s ability to attain job innovation and creative attitudes in PR?
- (iv) What is the influence of personalised attention in connection to Leader-PR personnel interrelationship in communication?
- (v) What is the influence of rewards and punishments on the PR personnel’s ability to achieve workplace commitment?



**Figure 1.1:** Conceptual Framework: Leadership Behaviour and Strategic PR Performance

**Source:** Field Data (2024)

## **Methodology**

### ***Theoretical Foundation***

The paper is based on the Path-Goal Theory of Motivation and the Excellence Theory. On the one hand, the Path-Goal Theory of Motivation developed by Robert House in 1971 posits that the leader's main objective should be to provide guidance, support, and help for subordinates to effectively achieve individual and organisational goals (Ratyan, Khalaf, & Rasli, 2013). This paper employed the Path-Goal Theory of Motivation to test how the motivation that is elicited by the leadership behaviours of both transactional and transformational leadership styles empowers or restricts the ability of the PR personnel to undertake strategic PR practice in the context of selected commercial banks in Tanzania. On the other hand, the Excellence Theory by James E. Grunig and Todd Hunt in 1984 and then advanced by James E. Grunig, Larrisa A. Grunig and David M. Dozier in 2002 resonates that communication is valuable to an organisation (Heath, 2013). This is because it enables the organisation to build good long-term relationships with strategic stakeholders, enabling it to save money by avoiding problems such as lawsuits, boycotts, and strikes that may result from unsatisfied groups of stakeholders (Anani-Bossman, 2020). The paper applied this theory, aiming to examine the extent to which the top leaders value strategic PR by instituting an enabling environment for the PR personnel to demonstrate their abilities in assuming strategic PR practice.

### ***Study Scope, Population, Area, Design, and Sample***

This study paid attention to three banking organisations in Tanzania, namely, the National Bank of Commerce (NBC), the National Micro-finance Bank (NMB plc), and CRDB Bank plc. The choice of the three banks was because they mirrored well the characteristics of high-profile commercial banks compared to others in the country. According to (<https://priceintanzania.com/best-banks-in-tanzania#>), NBC is Tanzania's oldest serving bank that was established in 1967, while NMB plc received several multi-international and national awards in recognition of its outstanding performance in the year 2021 with a "total assets of TZS. 8.7 trillion" (NMB Annual Report, 2021, p. 8). In the same year, CRDB bank plc

was “the largest bank in Tanzania with an asset base of TZS 8.8 trillion” (CRDB Annual Report, 2021, p. 10). The target population involved chief executive officers (CEOs), human resource directors (HRDs), PR personnel, and marketing directors in the Tanzanian banking sector. The organisations under study are located in the Ilala municipality in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The reason for the choice of Ilala municipality as the location for the present study was that it is the headquarters of several banking institutions including the commercial banks under investigation. Therefore, it offered a huge possibility of accessing the right, information-rich participants to ensure the relevant data inclusion criteria (Yin, 2016).

The researchers employed a case study design relying on NBC, NMB plc, and CRDB bank plc in order to undertake a detailed exploration of how their specific leadership styles interrelated with strategic PR practice. Eventually, the case study design enabled the researcher to provide a rich portrayal of the aforementioned variables from the standpoint of study participants in their real-life contexts. The sample size was 12 participants by which each bank had one CEO, one PR personnel, one HRD, and one Marketing Director to participate in the study. The researchers considered the 12 participants a good sample size for a face-to-face semi-structured interview because they only dealt with the dominant coalition (top management team) of the banking institutions under this study, excluding the non-management employees. Besides, according to Daymon and Holloway (2011), 4 to 40-sample size in qualitative studies is an adequate number. To fulfil the eligibility criteria for data inclusion, that is, accessing the right participants (Leedy & Ormrod, 2021), the study used a purposive sampling technique to select the mentioned participants (CEOs, HRDs, PR personnel, and Marketing Directors) in the banks. This is because one would expect such members in any organisation to influence the nature of strategic PR practice (Heath, 2013).

### ***Measurement***

According to Gunasekare (2021), different authors have measured organisational leadership styles and strategic PR practice in a variety of ways. Such ways include the use of qualitative case studies, a well-established approach to measuring these variables. Therefore, this paper used qualitative modes of inquiry, hence semi-structured interviews to collect data. The semi-structured interview technique enabled the researchers to discuss in-depth questions on organisational leadership style and the ability of the PR personnel to undertake strategic PR practice, and ask follow-up questions on unclear areas. This aligns with Leavy (2014, p. 286), who elucidates that “semi-structured interviews give the interviewer much more leeway for following up on whatever angles... deemed important.”

### ***Data Analysis***

Based on the nature of this study (the interpretivism philosophical research paradigm), the researchers applied thematic analysis that involved searching across the data set to find repeated patterns of meanings. Nevertheless, to achieve thematic analysis, the researchers observed the advice of Rossman and Rallis (2017) by transferring data from the voice recorder to computer folders, and storing each interview file according to a given sample group. After that, the researchers transcribed the audio files, proofread them, and assigned code names for anonymity purposes of the participants' real names. After the aforesaid, the researchers observed the following three steps to analyse and present the data: first, they identified data themes prevailing within the data set, and second, they analysed and presented the data that aligned with such themes. Lastly, the researchers offered a brief commentary (characterisation) on such data, based on theoretical lenses chosen to provide insights about them (Leedy & Ormrod, 2021, p. 380).

### ***Ethical Clearance***

In the current study, firstly, the researchers selected a study site without having stakes in the study outcomes and then identified the study problem

that benefited the participants. Secondly, the researchers sought permission to conduct research from the responsible authorities, namely Ilala municipality, Dar es Salaam region authorities, and the commercial banks under study. Thirdly, the researchers informed the participants of their rights to participate in the study, recording the interviews, and lastly, sought and obtained their consent. Besides, since some participants revealed their real names during the interview sessions, the researcher assigned code names for anonymity. Fourthly, during the reporting and sharing of data, the researchers straightforwardly used clear language to ensure both unbiasedness and appropriateness for the audiences of the study.

## **Results**

The paper examined whether transformational and transactional leadership styles motivated or hindered the PR personnel's ability to undertake strategic PR practice in selected commercial banks in Tanzania. As mentioned earlier, demonstrating the PR personnel's abilities to undertake strategic PR practice depends on, among other factors, the existing organisational leadership style and the related leader's behaviours. On this note, and in line with the previously indicated five questions that the article set to answer, in this section, we present results organised into five themes here under.

### ***Idealised Influence in Relation to the PR Personnel's Ownership of Organisational Communication Vision***

As indicated earlier, idealised influence (charisma) is one of the four behaviours of the transformational leadership style. Its main postulate is that the leader should formulate ideas and articulate the vision clearly in order to equip the followers with a sense of purpose, encouraging them to work beyond their self-interests to achieve the vision.

Thus, with regard to the question that intended to examine the extent to which the top leaders employ idealised influence to accelerate the PR personnel's ability to own the banks' communication visions, the study's

participants offered numerous opinions. With the exception of one PR personnel who said that she had no problem regarding the aspect in question, the remaining two PR personnel said the following:

Everything done about embracing communication of the bank's overall vision and the PR vision speaks for itself in the communication policy. In this case, I do not depend on the top leaders' encouragement to understand the communication needs of the bank (PR personnel B).

In this bank, everything designed for communicating PR strategies embeds its elements in the big picture (the vision), which, because it is clearly understood, it is not necessary for the bank's leaders to articulate or encourage it (PR personnel C).

Inferring from the foregoing two statements, the findings from the statements of the two PR personnel indicate that the top leaders played a lesser role in fostering shared overall visions and values to empower their PR personnel to own the communication visions.

Similarly, the findings from the analysis of the following representative comments of the CEOs, HRDs, and Marketing Directors were closely associated with the preceding findings of the two PR personnel:

There are well-established communication guidelines already in place. These clearly pronounce the desired bank's values for upholding and communicating (CEO A).

Upon employment, all employees in this financial organisation receive an orientation of operational visions, missions, and philosophies. These are proper write-ups in themselves. Therefore, they offer enough guidance regarding what to communicate (CEO B). The vision statement and related documents have clearly stated everything that the PR personnel need to know about the communication of the vision and associated values. Therefore, the PR

personnel can quickly know the communication requirements of the HR directorate through such documents (HRD B).

The articulation of communication objectives and activities under the marketing directorate starts from the bank's primary philosophy. It is from the primary philosophy where the PR personnel can draw PR plans associated with marketing issues (Marketing Director B).

The PR personnel adopt all the communication plans of activities and values falling under marketing from the overall communication guidance of the bank (Marketing Director C).

These statements testify the extent to which the CEOs, HRDs, and Marketing Directors expected the PR personnel to rely only on the specifications of the communication policies and vision statements to own the banks' communication visions. This means that the PR personnel lacked another side in their struggles to own the banks' communication visions: the leaders' actual mobilisation.

### **Inspirational Motivation in Relation to the PR Personnel's Work Performance**

Inspirational motivation refers to the ability of the organisational leader to stimulate enthusiasm among the followers for them to perform assignments that aim to achieve goals at the team or organisational level. Inspirational motivation exhibits such behaviours of the organisational leader as motivating employees, imparting enthusiasm, and modelling appropriate behaviours. The study's results indicate that, with the exception of one PR personnel, others pointed out the reliance on standing orders, communication circulars, and communication policies rather than personal involvement and engagement by the top leaders. Similarly, the opinions of the top leaders show that they could not personally demonstrate the required communication motivations with the PR personnel for improved PR work performance except by giving directives through the known banks' documents.

The following are examples of some of the comments from the participants:

The top leadership is excellent at acting as a model. It inspires and motivates the corporate affairs and PR office to carry out quality PR tasks because the executive committee has placed the bank's detailed formalities, policies, and standing orders as guidance. The most important thing, therefore, is to play by the rules and communication norms, which inspire and make it easy for the PR staff to avoid technical errors (PR personnel B).

Of course, the bank's bosses are excellent in this aspect. The senior leaders continuously release well-documented communication circulars, which define procedures for preparing quality PR plans in a manner that safeguards the bank's identity and protects its internal and external reputation (PR personnel C).

There are stipulated standing orders, which cover PR issues as well. However, sometimes the CEO's office undertakes face-to-face talks with the PR director (CEO A).

The PR personnel's job description is categorical in terms of the expected communication behaviours or conducts from him. Hence, it does not require one to depend on coaching from specific individuals or leaders. This is the safest way to address PR issues (HRD B).

The PR staff have a better understanding of the motivations and the expected communication behaviours of their work. That should be enough to provide communication guidance (Marketing Director B).

Considering these comments, the PR personnel mentioned that their top leaders were excellent in providing a model of appropriate communication behaviours personally as a way of inspiring and motivating their enthusiasm in performing the PR tasks better. However, looking at the reasons for excellence as given by the PR personnel, the top leaders restricted them to relying on directives such as the banks' detailed formalities, policies, standing orders, and circulars to gain the required passion during the planning and implementation of PR tasks. Similarly, the top leaders clearly

stated their reliance on such directive documents, not personally demonstrating the required communication motivations with the PR personnel for improved PR work performance.

### **Intellectual Stimulation in Relation to Job Innovation and Creative Attitudes of the PR Personnel**

Intellectual stimulation is yet another transformational leadership style behaviour. It constitutes the organisational leaders' propensity to enable the PR personnel with the ability to challenge the organisational communication-held assumptions on problem-solving procedures by suggesting new approaches to doing things. This means the PR personnel demonstrate the ability to be innovative or creative, presenting novel PR strategies that aim to challenge communication normality or the status quo. He or she digs into the rapidly shifting competitive information of the audiences, adjusting communication strategies according to their expectations, demands, and response requirements. Thus, the results indicate that only a minority of the comments of the study's participants attest that the top leadership's environment was accommodative, in this respect. On this account, the representative responses of the study's participants read as follows:

In a way, the top leadership's climate fosters an opportunity for PR innovation because it allows the PR staff to employ relevant communication skills. However, the PR staff keeps the PR or communication innovation and creativity efforts within the atmosphere of the top leadership's directives and communication policies to ensure it does not harm the bank's image and other foreseen business plans (PR personnel B).

Innovation and creativity is the prime movers of the banking business. However, since the commercial banks in Tanzania operate under very challenging and competitive environmental work pressures, any new proposal to suggest changes to the bank's communication or PR strategy is subject to the approval of the bank's top management (PR personnel C).

The creativity of the bank's workforce (including those in the PR department) is essential as it helps to achieve a return on investment (ROI). However, proper scrutiny of all these efforts by the bank's leadership is necessary (CEO C).

Communication, innovation, and creativity in the PR department are good, though they depend on consensus within the management team (HRD A).

There are clear top leadership standing procedures and detailed documents prescribing the limits of innovation and creativity in all departments. The corporate affairs and PR section is no exception (Marketing Director B).

Considering the opinions of the PR personnel, they were not very comfortable regarding the top leadership's environment on enhancing the ability to be innovative or creative, presenting novel PR strategies. Such opinions suggest the top leadership's transactional directive behaviours that restrict the PR personnel's ability to be creative. In addition, the opinions of the CEOs, HRDs, and Marketing Directors demonstrate that they were too strict, demanding that the creativity efforts of the PR personnel tally with the existing communication status quo or normality of the banks. This implies a limitation on the PR personnel's ability to dig creatively into the rapidly shifting competitive information of the banks' stakeholders and adjust communication strategies according to the stakeholders' expectations.

### ***3.1 Personalised Attention in Connection to Leader-PR Personnel Interrelationship in Communication***

In essence, personalised attention (individualised consideration) as one of the behaviours of transformational leadership style defines the attention rendered by the organisational leadership to the needs of an individual follower; in this case, the PR personnel. This leadership behaviour enables both parties to receive constructive feedback from each other and mentorship aspects on the side of the PR personnel. Leader-PR personnel interrelationship in communication necessitates understanding, dialogue,

and cooperation for timely and accurate communication. This help to attain the goals of both the organisation and its stakeholders. The organisational leader's ability to interrelate in communication with the PR personnel cultivates a participatory attitude between them—an idea attached to the symmetric communication worldview that values dialogue and teamwork. This study aimed to determine the extent to which individualised consideration as an element of transformational leadership style related to strategic PR practice. In this regard, the results demonstrate that one PR personnel was comfortable and expressed her opinion in the following manner:

The CEO is a good listener and provides instant feedback. Thus, even when the PR department experiences poor cooperation from other top managers in securing appropriate PR interactions with them, the CEO's engagement with the PR department provides a remedy. I therefore feel welcome to interact with him on business communication matters (PR personnel A).

The extracts from the other two PR personnel and two representative CEOs read as follows:

The CEO's representation is usually through the marketing director because the corporate affairs and PR office is under the marketing directorate. However, the CEO's door is open if the corporate affairs and PR office has something substantial on strategic PR initiatives to dialogue with her, yet frequent or direct engagement is hard to achieve (PR personnel B).

The CEO is available for engagement in open-thought communication dialogue with the PR department. However, the basis of interactions between us depends on how the department has succeeded or failed to succeed in meeting the measurable PR KPIs prescribed in the undertaken communication programmes. Thus, since the regulation of communication efforts in this kind of business setting is hierarchical, the PR department mostly relies on the regulatory

communication policies that exist to access the offices of the top leaders when the need arises (PR personnel C).

Engagement in an open-thought communication dialogue between the office of the CEO and the corporate affairs and PR section depends on some hierarchical factors. In many instances, dialogues between the marketing director and the chief of corporate affairs and PR can result in better solutions for many of the communication issues, rather than with the CEO's office (CEO B).

The CEO's office welcomes communication interactions with the PR personnel on PR issues, especially for critical challenges, because all the leaders (directors, managers. . .) are busy chasing important commitments and deadlines with crucial stakeholders. Thus, the bank's management has explicitly documented all possible communication dilemmas to quickly tackle such issues in cases when the CEO is not reachable (CEO C).

These evidential statements show that one of the three PR personnel was comfortable with the level of engagement in open and thoughtful communication dialogue on strategic PR initiatives with the CEO. The statements of the other two PR personnel regarding the same aspect indicate negative feelings, apparently demonstrating that their ability to interrelate in communication with the CEOs was shallow or somewhat limited. In addition, the statements from the CEOs further authenticate the extent of limitation to the PR personnel, thwarting the personnel's ability to provide timely and accurate communication feedback to the CEOs.

### ***Rewards and Punishments in Relation to the PR Personnel's Workplace Commitment***

A peculiar feature of transactional leadership style is the use of contingent rewards and contingent punishments. These two behaviours of an organisational leader aim to keep up the status quo and ensure compliance of the followers. In the contingent rewards behaviour, the leader exchanges a reward to a follower, say, the PR personnel, for performing within specified limits. In contrast, in the contingent punishment behaviour, the

leader punishes the PR personnel for non-compliance (performing outside the specified key performance indicators—KPIs). Implicitly, like the transformational leadership style, the transactional leadership style links to either positive or negative employee workplace commitment. The examples of workplace commitment attributes include emotional attachment and involvement with the goals of the bank; desire to remain a member of the bank; exerting extra efforts in assignments; and loyalty to the top leaders. The study's results, on the one hand, reveal that although the PR personnel acknowledged the value of reward-and-punishment indicators on the performance of PR tasks, they did not consider them as the primary basis for making crucial strategic PR practice decisions and commitments. On the other hand, the findings signify that the top leaders praised the implementation of reward-and-punishment indicators aligned with the transactional leadership orientation, culminating to a set of clear directives to the PR personnel. The participant's representative quotes read as follows:

Corporate banks are always in competition to attract more customers and make them happy. Therefore, although the bank leaders involve us through meetings, they are very categorical that any deviation from the set PR goals (KPIs) will attract some form of sanctions according to the existing policies. Therefore, I would prefer the freedom to plan and produce PR results to be able to exercise PR duties professionally (PR personnel C).

It is a common management practice to drive the workforce's commitment through rewards and punishments. Therefore, in communicating the bank's goals, we use reward-and-punishment outcomes to ensure appropriate communication behaviours or conduct of the PR personnel (CEO A).

This bank uses reward-and-punishment indicators to influence compliance of its workforce, including the staff in the corporate affairs and PR department (HRD A).

Rewards-and-punishment indicators are essential because they stimulate the communication aptitude of the PR personnel when working to address the bank's overall communication goals and the specific marketing activities (Marketing Director B).

These substantiations indicate generally the negative contribution of transactional leadership's reward-and-punishment behaviours to the PR personnel's workplace commitment. As the PR personnel's statements suggest, the banks' top leaders relied on various forms of reward-and-punishment indicators through various forms, such as the KPIs, in boosting the PR personnel's ability to achieve workplace commitment. The statements show that the PR personnel discredited the top leaders' overreliance on such indicators because they reduced the PR personnel's commitment and freedom to exercise professionalism. In addition, the above sentiments establish that the CEOs, HRDs, and Marketing Directors were positive regarding the reward-and-punishment indicators intended to achieve the commitment of the PR personnel. This reflects the leaders' reliance on transactional leadership practices, hindering the PR personnel's mindset for creativity and long-term planning of PR strategies in the banks, which is not a recommended practice.

### **Discussion**

One of the aspects presented in the preceding section was the opinions of the study's participants about idealised influence in relation to the PR personnel's ability to own the organisational communication vision. In this aspect, the top leaders in one of the three banks set an excellent example by aligning actions with the shared bank's values in communication undertakings. This scenario positively corroborates several leadership scholars (e.g. Birasnav, 2013; Garg & Ramjee, 2013; McCleskey, 2014; Yahya & Ebrahim, 2016) who insist that an organisational leader should use idealised influence to promote shared values and vision to empower the followers with an aptitude to fulfil the organisational vision. For instance, Birasnav (2013) argues that the leader who uses idealised influence develops a vision and then invokes and supports employees to perform

effectively. Then, McCleskey (2014, p. 120) concurs with that when he notices that, by leading the way towards vision fulfilment, the leader who uses idealised influence entices the followers to emulate him or her as they “attribute the leader with certain qualities.” As shown in the preceding section, the findings from the other two banks indicated that the top leaders played a lesser role in fostering shared overall visions and values to empower the PR personnel to own the communication visions. Thus, the CEOs, HRDs, and Marketing Directors expected the PR personnel to rely only on the specifications of the communication policies, KPIs, and general vision statements to acquire the ability to own the banks’ communication visions. This means that the PR personnel lacked another side in their struggles to own the banks’ communication visions, which is the idealised influence or actual mobilisation of the leader in imparting a sense of communication purpose. However, the top leadership’s mobilisation in imparting a sense of communication purpose leads to the PR personnel’s strong belief in and acceptance of the organisational communication goals and willingness to exert considerable PR efforts on behalf of the organisation. It also leads to a sense of the PR personnel’s loyalty, obligation and duty to the idealised influence leader (Garg & Ramjee, 2013), boosting the zeal to pursue PR strategies. Thus, in a business such as banking, communicating the overall vision to the stakeholders requires the PR personnel to act as a link between the bank and its strategic stakeholders. However, for the PR practitioner to succeed in providing the link, the bank’s leaders should enlist the PR personnel in the overall vision and appeal to shared communication ambitions.

In the same thinking, Macnamara and Gregory (2018) believe that even though reporting against agreed KPIs is a common management requirement, organisational leaders should adopt a holistic approach that considers all outcomes and impacts of communication as part of a learning and informing strategy. In other words, apart from the existing KPIs and communication policies, the principles of transformational leadership style and Path-Goal Theory of Motivation underscore the need for a leader who

uses idealised influence to instil within employees a sense of purpose and obligation to pursue strategies that focus energy and resources (Garg & Ramjee, 2013). Similarly, Yahaya and Ebrahim (2016) posit that top leaders, as role models, should reinforce the subordinates' image of competence and high self-confidence for enhanced effectiveness in planning and executing duties. Therefore, in the context of the current study, the top leaders should adopt idealised influence attributes by imparting a sense of communication purpose that sensitises the PR personnel to own the overall visions of the banks, hence focusing on the needs of communication. This sensitisation could accelerate the alignment of PR efforts with the overall corporate communication strategies of the banks.

On inspirational motivation in relation to the PR personnel's work performance, the results of this study showed that the banks' PR personnel relied on the existing formalities, such as banks' detailed formalities, policies, standing orders, and circulars as stimuli for their ability to improve PR work performance. This suggests that the top leadership lacked the aptitude to demonstrate personally the desired PR actions that could motivate the PR personnel to mobilise their communication competence for improved PR work performance. However, one of the significant characteristics of an inspirational motivational leader is to model the way personally and show openness and support to followers. This means that he or she demonstrates the desired behaviours to the followers (Gandolfi & Stone, 2017). In return, the leaders' demonstration of such behaviours entices the PR personnel to exhibit the willingness to engage with their leaders and improve PR work performance. This means that the PR personnel offer task-related ideas and opinions, and perform quality PR duties that add value to organisational goals (Ruck, Welch, & Menara, 2017). Meng and Berger (2018) argue that open and supportive organisational leadership enables efficient PR practice by shaping the PR personnel's behaviours.

Moreover, continuously releasing communication circulars and orders by the banks' top leadership, as revealed by the preceding findings, equates to

the transactional leadership style of giving directives to the PR personnel rather than involving and engaging them during the planning and performance of PR tasks. Involving and engaging the PR personnel could translate into a good feature of the transformational leadership style. That is, since involving and engaging is motivational, it moves the PR personnel to produce better communication results. This is the main idea of the Path-Goal Theory of Motivation, which, as clarified by Ratyan et al. (2013, p. 49), underscores that “effective leadership must be able to motivate their subordinates to do their best and exploit all their potential to contribute to the development of the organisation.” In addition, to minimise the tension between transactional and transformational leadership styles, leadership scholars (e.g., Gandolfi & Stone, 2017; Gunasekare, 2021; Odumeru & Ifeanyi, 2013; Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016) deduce that transformational leadership should augment the weaknesses of transactional leadership behaviours. This means that the top leadership of the banking organisations in the current study may combine both transformational motivation leadership traits and transactional leadership traits at the same time. This could result in a synergy that could help forge better relationship outcomes with the banks’ strategic stakeholders. This study invites the banks’ top leaders to understand that it is not enough to offer circulars, job descriptions, and standing orders to the PR personnel as the main basis of motivation but also demonstrate the desired PR actions that motivate the practitioners to go an extra mile in performing communication roles.

Regarding intellectual stimulation in relation to job innovation and creative attitudes of the PR personnel, the study results notably established that the PR personnel could hardly propose any significant creativity to address the pressing challenges confronting the banks outside the usual guidelines of the communication policies and the transactional directives of the top leadership. However, one of the limitations of the transactional leadership style behaviours is that it hinders the innovativeness attitude of employees (Kark et al., 2017) because the employees do what the leader expects in order to avoid punishment. According to the principles of the Excellence

Theory, organisations should deliver quality communication service to their stakeholders (Godam et al., 2019). However, for quality communication services to happen, the organisations and their PR personnel should demonstrate job innovation and creative attitudes in PR strategies because they understand that the numerous groups that PR deals with have different characteristics and needs. In that case, PR personnel should have the opportunity to address communication problems creatively by thinking outside the existing status quo. Thinking outside the existing status quo accelerates the capacity to address future communication problems that might be unforeseen by the top leadership.

Therefore, in this paper, we argue that, although it is correct for the top leaders to emphasise sticking to the bank's communication norms when implementing strategic PR initiatives, it is also important to be aware of the limitations attached to that rigidity. Rigidity, in this regard, undermines the PR personnel's creative ability to manage the banks' reputation. It is important to be aware that flexibility through allowing new ways of communicating the banks' philosophies and services demonstrates the value of the transformational leadership style. That is, flexibility would allow the PR personnel, "a risk manager who is familiar with stakeholders' opinion" (Harrison & Mühlberg, 2014, p. 16), to assist the bank's CEO in understanding information related to such stakeholders, address the contextual risks, and attain the best communication outcomes. In the context of the current study, therefore, the top leadership of the banks should nurture an environment of support that hastens the PR personnel's creative attitudes to accelerate the communication agenda. This would help beat the external challenges confronting the banks, such as competition and unpredictable communication technologies.

Another aspect indicated in this study's results was personalised attention in connection to Leader-PR personnel's interrelationship in communication. Regarding this aspect, the findings revealed that the PR practitioners' ability to engage in open and thoughtful communication dialogue on strategic PR initiatives with the CEOs was somewhat limited due to hierarchical

bureaucracy. Such difficulty could mean thwarting the PR personnel's ability to gain chances of dialogue, understanding, and cooperation with the banks' CEOs in the process of providing accurate communication on different PR initiatives. Notwithstanding the foregoing, Garg and Ramjee (2013) explain that the organisational leader who demonstrates the personalised attention leadership behaviour should be attentive to the individual needs of the followers and act as a mentor. This view corresponds with the Path-Goal Theory of Motivation, which calls for organisational leaders to guide the employees to perform in the right way, accelerating the achievement of overall organisational goals (Ratyan et al., 2013). As Gill (2015) notices, communication interrelationships between the top leadership and the PR personnel help to improve the PR strategy of storytelling (corporate narratives) between the two parties. In turn, the PR personnel can use the leader's perspective from such stories to assign meaning related to organisational practices, policies, and events. Further, Lipsik (2020) argues that communication interrelationships are advantageous to top leaders because they can use them to generate the untapped collective wisdom in the organisation that helps accelerate the development of new ideas, processes, and solutions. It is crucial to strengthen communication interrelationship between the CEOs and PR personnel to galvanise a committed internal reputation that could also accelerate a stronger external reputation. Training for the banks' top leaders would reinforce their comprehension of the value of strategic communication agenda, steering the PR profession's propensity amongst the leaders.

Regarding the aspect of rewards and punishments as related to the PR personnel's ability to achieve workplace commitment, the results indicated that the reward-and-punishment indicators denied the PR personnel the power to make important strategic PR practice decisions and commitments. This means that the banks' top leaders gave more weight on directives to the PR personnel rather than engagement and dialogue in undertaking

communication tasks. Although the reward-and-punishment indicators may be helpful, the overreliance on such indicators results in shallow communication strategies. The indicators may lead to the PR personnel's inability to think further, driven by uncertainties about whether the banks' superiors will accept the proposed strategies or not. Thus, transactional leadership's behaviours tend to limit dialogues between the leader and the followers because of the "temporary exchanges of gratification" (McCleskey (2014, p. 122). The limitation of dialogues, the author argues, is detrimental to the organisation's mission because it creates the followers' resentment, and makes them utilise a one-size-fits-all universal approach to leadership theory. Such temporary gratification disregards situational and contextual factors related to organisational challenges. Moreover, transactional leadership style behaviours conform to the Excellence Theory's description of "the asymmetrical concept of power [that] involves leaders trying to control and make others dependent on them" (Men & Stacks, 2013, p. 175).

Therefore, the authors of this study argue that, engaging the banks' PR personnel in the planning and implementation of PR tasks rather than sticking to the rewards-and-punishments indicators is essential. Engagement enables the PR personnel to think outside the box by proposing sound PR strategies beneficial to the communication aims of the banks. At the policy level, engagement entails the creation of a participatory PR communication strategy and specific sub-strategies at all leadership levels of the banks as an essential element of their visions or philosophies. This would help sensitize the PR communication culture, which is specific to a particular bank. The banks would then recognise strategic PR as a crucial element that assists them to achieve vision through effective communication, bearing in mind that there is no leadership without communication.

### **Conclusion**

In light of this study, it is evident that the success of strategic PR in Tanzania's commercial banks largely depends on the leadership approach

adopted by top executives. Leaders who demonstrate idealised influence by promoting a strong sense of communication purpose can inspire PR personnel to align with the banks' overall vision. This sense of ownership fosters a focus on communication priorities and strengthens the alignment between PR activities and corporate communication strategies. Merely issuing circulars, job descriptions, and standing orders is insufficient; bank leaders must lead by example, modelling the desired PR behaviours that inspire the PR personnel to go the extra mile in executing their communication roles.

Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of cultivating a supportive organisational environment that nurtures creativity and responsiveness among PR personnel. Engaging the PR personnel in both the planning and implementation of communication strategies rather than relying solely on reward-and-punishment mechanisms encourages innovative thinking and strengthens internal communication bonds, particularly between CEOs and PR teams. This internal cohesion can, in turn, reinforce external reputation. Commitment in this context entails emotional attachment to organisational goals, willingness to remain a member, going beyond assigned duties, and demonstrating loyalty. By empowering PR personnel to think critically and proactively, banks stand a better chance of overcoming external challenges such as competition and evolving communication technologies.

### **Acknowledgements**

The authors of this article acknowledge the people and institutions that have made this work possible.

### **Funding Information and Conflict of Interest Statement**

This research study was unfunded. Therefore, the authors of this article declare that there were no conflict of interest or competing ideas to put forth.

## References

- Amirul, S. R., & Daud, H. N. 2012. A Study on the Relationship Between Leadership Styles and Leadership Effectiveness in Malaysia GLCs. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 4(8), 193–202.
- Anani-Bossman, A. A. 2020. An Exploration of Strategic Public Relations Management in Ghana. *Public Relations Inquiry*, 10(1), 73–96. doi:10.1177/2046147x20979292.
- Birasnav, M. 2013. Knowledge Management and Organisational Performance in the Service Industry: The Role of Transformational Leadership Beyond the Effects of Transactional Leadership. *Journal of Business Research*, 67, 1622–1629. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2013.09.006.
- Broom, G. M. & Sha, B. 2013. *Cutlip and Center's Effective Public Relations* (11th ed). Pearson.
- Daymon, C. & Holloway, I. 2011. *Qualitative Research Methods in Public Relations*. 2nd ed. Routledge.
- Gandolfi, F. & Stone, S. 2017. The Emergence of Leadership Styles: A Clarified Categorization. *Review of International Comparative Management*, 18(1). 18-30.
- Garg, A. K. & Ramjee, D. 2013. The Relationship Between Leadership Styles and Employee Commitment at a Parastatal Company in South Africa. *International Business & Economics Research Journal*. 12, 1411-1436, [doi.org/10.19030/iber.v12i11.8180](https://doi.org/10.19030/iber.v12i11.8180).
- Gill, R. 2015. *Why the PR strategy of storytelling improves employee engagement and adds value to CSR: An integrated literature review*. *Public Relations Review*, 41(5), 662–674. doi:10.1016/j.pubrev.2014.02.012
- Godam, E. G, Omega, C. & Ochonogor, C. 2019. Dissecting the Excellence Theory in Public Relations Practices of Electricity Distribution Companies in Nigeria: *International Journal of English Language and Communication Studies*, 5 (2), 14-25.

- Gunasekare, U.L.T.P. 2021. Leaders of the Banking Industry: An Investigation on Effective Leadership. *KINERJA*, 25, 1-15. doi: 10.24002/kinerja.v25i1.4048.
- Harrison, B. & Mühlberg, J. 2014. *Leadership Communication: How Leaders Communicate and how Communicators Communicate in Today's Global Enterprise*. Business Expert Press, LLC. <https://priceintanzania.com/best-banks-in-tanzania#>). Retrieved on June 12 2021.
- Heath, R. L. 2013. *Encyclopedia of Public Relations* (2nd ed). Sage.
- Kark, R., Van Dijk, D., & Vashdi, D. R. 2017. Motivated or Demotivated to be Creative: The Role of Self-Regulatory Focus in Transformational and Transactional Leadership Processes. *Applied Psychology*, 67, 186–224. doi:10.1111/apps.12122.
- Leavy, P. 2014. *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Oxford University Press.
- Leedy, P. D. & Ormrod, J. E. 2021. *Practical Research: Planning and Design* (12th ed.). Pearson.
- Lipsik, R. R. 2020. Reframing the narrative: The dialogic mind set within leadership performance. *Seminal Paper*. 1-50. Retrieved May 18, 2022 from <https://minds.wisconsin.edu>.
- Macnamara, J. & Gregory, A. 2018. Expanding Evaluation to Progress Strategic communication: Beyond Message Tracking to Open Listening. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 12(4), 469–486. doi:10.1080/1553118x.2018.1450255.
- McCleskey, J. A. 2014. Situational, Transformational, and Transactional Leadership and Leadership Development. *Journal of Business Studies Quarterly*. 5(4), 117-130.
- Men, L. R. & Stacks, D. W. 2013. The Impact of Leadership Style and Employee Empowerment on Perceived Organizational Reputation. *Journal of Communication Management*, 17(2), 171–192. Doi: 10.1108/13632541311318765.

- Odumeru, J. A, & Ifeanyi, G. O. 2013. Transformational vs. Transactional Leadership Theories: Evidence in Literature. *International Review of Management and Business Research*, 2, 355-361.
- Ratyan, A.T., Khalaf, A. B. & Rasli, A. 2013. Overview of Path-Goal Leadership Theory. *Jurnal Teknologi*, 64(2), 49-53.
- Rossman, G. B., & Rallis, S. F. 2017. *An Introduction to Qualitative Research: Learning in the Field* (4th ed.). California, USA: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Ruck, K., Welch, M., & Menara, B. 2017. Employee Voice: An Antecedent to Organisational Engagement? *Public Relations Review*, 43, 904–914. doi:10.1016/j.pubrev.2017.04.008.
- Seitel, F. P. 2017. *The Practice of Public Relations: Global Edition*. (13th ed.). Pearson.
- Wilcox, D. L, Cameron, G. T & Reber, B. H. 2015. *Public Relations Strategies and Tactics: Global Edition*. 11th ed. Edinburgh Gate: Pearson.
- Yahaya, R., & Ebrahim, F. 2016. Leadership Styles and Organisational Commitment: Literature Review. *Journal of Management Development*, 35, 190–216. doi: 10.1108/jmd-01-2015-000.
- Yin, R. K. 2016. *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish*. 2nd ed. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.