



Journal of Arts & Humanities

Volume 15, Issue 02, 2026: 11-21

Article Received: 11-11-2025

Accepted: 16-01-2026

Available Online: 21-02-2026

ISSN: 2167-9045 (Print), 2167-9053 (Online)

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18533/journal.v15i2.2629>

Exploration of the social development priorities of urban people in Zanzibar

Nassir Massoud Nassor¹, Yussuf Ramadhan Zubeir (PhD)², Asha Hayeshi (PhD)³

ABSTRACT

Understanding the social development priorities of urban residents has been a focus of both national and international agendas for many years. However, this agenda is often overlooked in developing countries, where many individuals remain poorly connected and marginalised. The study explored the social development priorities of urban residents in Zanzibar, focusing on five groups: religious leaders, political leaders, urban traders, urban youths, and public servants. An exploratory design using qualitative interviews and FGDs was employed. The sample comprised 203 key informants selected from five groups: 42 religious leaders, 22 politicians, 53 urban traders, 48 public servants, and 38 youths. Thematic analysis was used to interpret each group's social development priorities. The findings revealed that these priorities vary across groups. Each group has its own social development priorities, which stem from socio-economic activities, the political order, and the particular period. The main agents shaping the perceived social development priorities of urban residents in Zanzibar are the government, development partners, and social interaction dynamics. The study recommends that the government and development partners consider convening the Universal Forum, which brings together representatives from each group and other development stakeholders to discuss issues relating to their social development priorities and to achieve a common consensus. This approach will help the government and policymakers gather timely information on the current needs of urban populations, including what they want, why they want it, and the extent to which they want it.

Keywords: Social Development, Priorities, urban residents, Well-being.

This is an open access article under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License.

1. Introduction

Understanding the social development priorities of urban residents at a specific time and place requires careful investigation. These priorities emerge as individuals adapt to ongoing social and

¹ Assistant Lecturer, Department of Social Science, The Institute of Public Administration, Zanzibar. Email: nassreeem@gmail.com
Phone: 0777601501.

² Lecturer, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, The University of Dodoma, P.O. Box 395, Dodoma. Email: yramadhan34@yahoo.com, yusuf.zuber@udom.ac.tz Phone: +255(0)756869343.

³ Lecturer, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, College of Humanities and Social Science, The University of Dodoma, P.O. Box 395, Dodoma. Email: ashalulu@gmail.com

economic changes, primarily shaped by needs and interests (Inglehart, 2020). According to the 1995 Canadian World Conference, Social Development is defined as a cross-sectoral field introduced to promote the right, integrated well-being affected by social change (Hayden et al., 2022). In light of this conference, comparative differences in social development priorities emerge across individuals, groups, and societies, necessitating an integrated approach to identify their specific needs and interests.

In Europe, for example, emphasis is placed on ensuring social protection, participation, and economic opportunities, while in Asia, enabling strategies have been applied to promote democracy and social interaction, which are considered priorities for social development (Harris, 2021; Hakeem et al, 2023). In Africa, the focus is mainly on healthcare, education, water, electricity, and transport infrastructure, as experienced in countries such as Rwanda, Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda (Adeniran et al., 2023). In a societal context, urban planners use several policy issues to determine and position people's priorities for their well-being. However, shared social development priorities are often overlooked due to differing historical and political backgrounds, a vital area for ongoing research.

The history of Zanzibar society has been shaped by the blending of cultures and bloodlines from Persians, Arabs, Indians, and Africans. Social interactions and intermarriage among these groups have made Zanzibar a centre of multiculturalism, making it challenging to define expectations and social development priorities for their well-being (Scheidecker, 2023). The islands' geographic boundaries facilitate the sharing of life skills among people of different origins in Zanzibar. Additionally, logistical factors across groups encourage the islands' territories to develop distinct interests, which require careful consideration. Al Matani (2024) concluded that in Zanzibar, cultural diversity is high, making it difficult to define the specific needs of each group in the urban area. The unique challenges from a geographical and political perspective, combined with the universal human pursuit of well-being, have generated several researchable questions. The answers to these questions should shed light on perceived priorities for social development and integrated policy, aiming to strike a balance in development planning across social groups in urban areas. Overall, social development priorities in urban Zanzibar have not been sufficiently examined, despite increased focus on education, health, and the environment.

2. Literature review

Despite several attempts to define social development, a gap remains in its inclusiveness. Social development is a planned process of change that reduces inequalities and promotes people's well-being (Hayden et al., 2022). Empirical analyses grounded in Capability Theory show that perceptions of social development priorities are shaped by both objective human needs and socially constructed meanings. Research across developing contexts indicates that societies with limited access to healthcare, education, and employment consistently rank these services as higher priorities for social development (Cerf, 2023). This supports the urban political economy's argument that social development in the urban context is driven by the logic of capital rather than social need.

3. Methodology

The study employed an exploratory design to gather detailed insights into urban residents' perceptions of social development priorities. This approach was well-suited to the study's goal. It involved 203 key informants selected from five distinct groups: religious leaders (42), political leaders (22), urban traders (53), public servants (48), and urban youths (38). The number of informants in each group was determined based on data saturation, a fundamental principle of qualitative research (Aldiabat et al., 2018). The data analysis was thematic, moving from the original data collection tools (interview and FGD guides) to specialised Excel templates. The researcher examined all issues in the dataset to become familiar with the data in an easily interpretable way, revealing underlying messages. At this stage, key phrases and exploratory ideas related to social development priorities were noted.

4. Findings and discussion

This section introduces the study's key findings, which reflect the group distinction on social roles and institutional positions. It presented perceived priorities of religious leaders, politicians, urban youth, public servants, and urban traders regarding social development.

Theme one: Social development priorities required by religious leaders

The results show that the religious leaders mentioned recognition of religious ethics, social equality, economic opportunities, and education and health services as the most crucial social development priorities for their livelihoods. These priorities are explained thoroughly below:

Religious ethics

The results show that religious leaders in urban Zanzibar view religious ethics as the top priority for social development, complaining that weakened ethical values have accelerated moral decline in urban areas. According to their perceptions, religiously grounded ethical development transforms human conduct and community ties. It enables voluntary compliance and social accountability beyond formal regulation. During an interview with a leader of a Mosque (Gibril Mosque at Stone Town-Zanzibar Municipality), the following concern was presented:

We are living in a society lacking spiritual ethics, poor discipline, lovelessness, and the marginalisation of our cultural principles. Urban problems such as drug abuse, family breakdown and crime are moral issues rather than economic issues; hence, religious ethics position people to care for others and live responsibly.

The above quotation emphasises that the challenges of social development in urban Zanzibar are multidimensional and cannot be examined solely in terms of economic deprivation. By explaining drug abuse, crime, and family breakdown as moral issues, the respondent argues that these challenges originate from weakened norms, values, and personal responsibility as aspects of religious ethics, and not from employment or income alone. Religious ethics highlight their role as a behaviour-regulating framework that demonstrates personal conduct, reinforces social responsibility, and encourages care for others. In this view, religious ethics work as a social glue that empowers families, promotes compassionate behaviour, and enhances social cohesion.

A focus group discussion was organised with 13 participants, including four religious leaders, six Muslims, four Christians, one Hindu, and two Buddhists. During the FGD, there was strong convergence on the view that social problems cannot be understood solely through an economic lens but reflect deeper ethical deficiencies within the urban community.

However, the concern for religious ethics as a priority for social development is not voiced only in urban Zanzibar; it is also considered in other countries. In African countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, and Tanzania, religious ethics are essential for addressing persistent social challenges, including corruption, drug use, and stigmatisation (Alao et al., 2024). This is also the case in Uganda and Kenya, where ethical values drawn from religious teachings influence attitudes towards integrity and public service (Mutumba et al., 2025). The literature reveals a shared belief that ethical teachings, whether rooted in any religion, influence social harmony by reinforcing communal responsibility and strengthening families (Ishaque, 2025). Religious doctrines across religions and traditions, for example, reveal core values such as justice, responsibility, and honesty, which promote adherents' prosocial behaviour and moral reasoning.

Social equality

Social equality is another key priority for religious leaders in urban Zanzibar. Participants conceptualise social equality as fair treatment, equal dignity, and equal access to social and economic opportunities across gender, social status, and income. The findings show that religious leaders view inequality as a structural problem and a moral failure that undermines community trust and social cohesion. They believe that the absence of social equality weakens solidarity, fuels social tension, and contradicts core religious teachings on human dignity and justice. By contrast, according to respondents, enhancing social equality is recognised as a prerequisite for sustainable social development, underscoring the role of religious leadership in advocating for just urban communities. One participant (a Buddhist) explained the following statement during the interview:

The only way to tackle social development challenges in Zanzibar is through social equality that includes all religions in decision-making. If this occurs, social conflicts will not threaten unity.

The quotation above revealed that social equality is a prerequisite for sustainable social development in urban areas.

The findings from FGD showed that social equality is an essential priority for the well-being of urban residents. Religious leaders as social agents, advocating for inclusivity and fairness as necessary

components of social development. For equitable fairness and treatment, religious leaders place themselves as social and moral agents who can influence behaviour, attitudes and institutional practices. The following interfaith quotation was noted during the discussion:

All religions should be given equal opportunities. A strong and harmonious relationship among religions in Zanzibar is essential, as no one can reside in a place of worship forever.

The above quotation highlights a cohesive and stronger society with less social isolation. The issue of social equality has also received special attention in many countries where religious institutions exercise authority. A study by Hunter and Guiney (2020) found that 3-4 per cent of Christians in the Middle East demand social equality because they experience less recognition from the Muslim majority. In Africa, the social equality gap across religions is evident in countries such as Angola, Cameroon, and the Central African Republic, where Christianity has greater access to social and economic rights (Zandt, 2022). The findings of this study demonstrate an equality gap in some aspects of social development in urban Zanzibar, including access to social relations and opportunities to participate in public affairs (Larsen, 2020). The overall reasons for the persistence of this gap are religious mistrust, politico-religious nepotism and cultural background. This is a central argument of the religious minority group in urban Zanzibar due to a lack of capability to decide ways to improve their lives.

Equal economic opportunities

Equal Economic Opportunities is the third key social development priority among religious leaders in urban Zanzibar. All key religious leaders emphasised the importance of earning an income. Religious leaders described economic equity as both a practical necessity and a moral obligation, linking the fair provision of opportunities to justice, stewardship, and fairness. The Participant (Christian) mentioned the following quote during an interview:

Providing equal economic opportunities is a top priority. My religion opposes poverty and the marginalisation of its people. Equal economic opportunities help bridge the gap between those who have and those who have not.

The quotation reflects the religious leaders' perception that sustainable social development in urban Zanzibar relies on access to economic resources and other related opportunities. They view economic inequality as a reason for social distress, fragmentation, distrust, and persistent poverty. Shared opportunities are viewed as a mechanism for empowering communities, resilience, and cohesion.

An FGD with 13 participants from all religions was held to discuss the point mentioned above. The discussion revealed a gap in the availability of economic opportunities. The interfaith discussion showed that equal economic opportunity is a key mechanism for translating moral and ethical principles into tangible outcomes, although a wider gap was observed in urban Zanzibar. Participants emphasised the need for unbiased access to employment and income-generating activities. The discussion concluded with a statement emphasising the importance of equal economic opportunity:

Equal economic opportunities are vital because development does not rely solely on individuals. When people collaborate as a team, no one is blamed for problems; instead, the focus is on addressing dishonesty and social conflicts. Equal economic opportunities help fight discrimination, corruption, and social isolation.

The quotation above underscores the need for equal access to economic opportunities for all people, regardless of religion, politics, or place of origin. In the discussion, religious leaders linked economic equity to social responsibility, viewing it as essential for social cohesion, trust, and inclusive urban growth. Across faiths, FGD members agreed that economic fairness is a practical expression of social justice and ethical principles. The same is true in South Africa, where historical inequalities continue to shape economic opportunity (Zizzamia, 2020). However, religious leaders play a significant role in connecting their followers, although religious differences remain a challenge to equal opportunity.

Educational/health services

Health and educational services emerged as a key social development priority among religious leaders. Participants stated that access to quality education and healthcare is essential for community resilience, well-being, and sustainable social progress. Religious leaders view these services as a practical necessity and a moral responsibility, linking equitable education and health provision to ethical

teachings on care, compassion, and human dignity. During an interview with the Muslim clerk, the researcher quoted the following:

The significant impact of education is knowledge, which relates to mental health. For me, educational services are essential because they encompass knowledge, skills, behaviours, and attitudes that promote health and well-being.

The findings indicate that education and health services are priorities for religious leaders in promoting social development in urban Zanzibar. They emphasised that improving education and health is part of their spiritual responsibility, arguing that a healthy and educated population is a far better basis for fulfilling religious duties and for contributing significantly to social development. However, these priorities are not confined to Zanzibar alone; they are highly considered in many more countries, particularly in Africa. Bowen's (2020) study found that religious leaders view health and education as essential concepts and assets to civilisation. Development factors such as communication and technology are crucial for improving living standards, which can be achieved by managing greed and desires and by balancing spiritual and material growth.

Theme two: Perceived priority of the urban politicians

The second theme focuses on the priorities for social development among urban politicians in Zanzibar. Their social development priorities centred on improving social services, fostering social solidarity, and promoting social interactions as key strategies to advance civic engagement, social cohesion, and inclusive urban development. These priorities collectively reflect a governance-driven approach to social development, linking social integration, service delivery, and participatory engagement to sustainable urban progress. A detailed description of these priorities is provided below.

Improvement of social services

Improving social services is the primary priority for social development among urban politicians in Zanzibar. Participants argue that the accessibility, availability, and quality of essential services, including education, healthcare, sanitation, water supply, and urban infrastructure, are fundamental to reducing social inequalities and improving citizens' quality of life. Urban politicians believe that effective service delivery is both a key indicator and a core responsibility of local government in good governance. From their perspective, improved social services support social stability, influence public trust in institutions, and create an enabling environment for inclusive urban development. During an interview, one respondent described the following:

Social services are the foundation of my life; I always strive to ensure I receive them to the standard I expect. To me, social services will remain my priority now and forever.

Respondents viewed poor service delivery as a source of social tension and frustration, while effective services catalyse public trust in government institutions.

The findings above reflect the priority of social services for human development, highlighting that improved social services are engines for building human capability. Politicians' views on social services and their links to social development priorities have been examined in the literature and given a broad analytical perspective. Research from Sub-Saharan Africa highly supports these theoretical claims. In countries such as Ghana, Ethiopia, and Kenya, enhancing access to primary education, healthcare, and road infrastructure is linked to improved life opportunities and intergenerational mobility (Peña et al., 2024). These findings demonstrate the importance of social services for long-term capabilities rather than relying solely on temporary income.

Solidarity among urban people

Urban politicians identified solidarity among urban residents as a critical social development priority in Zanzibar. Participants described solidarity as a communal sense of mutual support, belonging, and a broader responsibility among urban populations. Overall, the focus on solidarity reflects politicians' recognition that sustainable urban development relies on both service provision and inclusive social relations, as well as strong social cohesion. During the interview, a female politician stated the following:

Fostering solidarity is essential to our mission, as we aim to improve the welfare of our people. We must unite all individuals in Zanzibar so they can live together as one community. When our people stand in solidarity, we can strengthen the economy and politics.

The quotation reflects urban politicians' understanding of solidarity as a fundamental element of effective urban governance and social cohesion. It underscores the view that mutual support, shared identity, and collective responsibility reduce social tensions arising from religious, political, and economic differences. The findings present solidarity as a social resource that supports sustainable urban development and fosters peaceful coexistence in Zanzibar. In rapidly urbanising African cities, politicians use solidarity to manage social fragmentation arising from unemployment, inequality, and ethnic diversity (Collord, 2021). This fosters greater trust in local authorities and encourages participatory action among citizens.

Theme three: Social development priorities of urban traders

The social development of urban traders in Zanzibar extends beyond conventional measures of well-being to encompass the better business environment and the regulatory framework as essential prerequisites for sustainable business growth and broader community prosperity. Below are deep explorations of these key priorities of social development for urban traders:

Better business environment

Evidence from 53 traders, including wholesalers, retailers, food vendors, and street vendors, indicates a strong consensus that social well-being is initially shaped by the circumstances in which businesses operate. Urban traders consistently link a favourable business environment to livelihood security and income stability, positioning it as a powerful driver of social development. Across trader categories, respondents emphasise that reliable infrastructure, secure trading spaces, and predictable operating conditions affect their ability to meet fundamental social needs and support dependents. These findings show that improvements in the urban business environment have multiplier effects on social development outcomes, underscoring its potential role in inclusive urban development in Zanzibar. The researcher interviewed a street vendor and responded as follows:

My business needs careful attention to grow substantially because I must attract customers rather than wait for them to discover me. I should focus on specific areas to operate in so people can easily notice me, rather than wasting effort on little results.

The quotation shows that urban traders view social development as inseparable from the dignity and security of livelihood. It underscores that a supportive business environment is central to social inclusion and business stability. The findings indicate that traders urgently need a supportive environment for their investments. However, the need for a better business environment is not unique to urban traders in Zanzibar; it is evident in many African countries, including Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. However, government, urban planners, and business authorities can promote business development and the welfare of urban traders. This supports the idea that in developing countries where the political situation remains uncertain, urban traders face difficulties managing their businesses, leading to greater complexity and business failure (Martinez, 2022). This occurs because business is closely connected to good governance, in which politicians are decision-makers.

Favourable business rules and regulations

The second priority in the social development of urban traders is favourable rules and regulations. Urban traders stated that better rules and regulations enable clearer understanding and less ambiguous business challenges. They insist that the social value of regulations depends not on their emergence but on their fairness, clarity, and the consistency of enforcement, which directly shape institutional trust and livelihood security. Supportive regulatory frameworks with affordable fees, simplified licensing, and predictable enforcement were thought to encourage voluntary compliance, reduce vulnerability, and enhance traders' social inclusion. An interview with a retailer at his shop on Vikokotoni Street revealed the following statement:

Rules and regulations which are blurred lead to conflict and stress, but supportive regulations influence dignity and livelihood. That business protection is all about social development means to us.

The quotation above indicates that urban traders in Zanzibar perceive social development in terms of dignity, livelihood security and regulatory protection, rather than abstract economic growth. A focus group discussion was then held with 10 participants, comprising three wholesalers, three retailers, two food vendors, and two street vendors. The FGD took place at Jamhuri Garden and focused on "Available rules and regulations as new priorities for sustainable business development in urban areas in Zanzibar." Participants collectively agreed that inconsistently enforced rules undermine

individual well-being by creating income instability, mistrust of authorities, and stress, particularly among street and food vendors. Following the discussion, the following quotation captures the overall argument of the FGD participants:

The requirements for business entry and the challenges of complying with government regulations impose significant burdens on small business owners in Zanzibar.

The quotation above highlights a core theoretical aspect of urban political economy: that urban economic outcomes are shaped more by political and institutional arrangements than by individual effort. Business rules are politically produced rather than neutral, reinforcing the idea that urban traders' livelihoods depend on power in urban governance. Literature adds that soft laws and regulations foster a supportive environment, improve business performance, and promote sustainability (Lawani, A. 2021). Effective business rules aim to guide firm behaviour, supported by existing policies, in response to opportunities, threats, strengths, or challenges.

Theme four: Perceived importance of urban youth

The part explores the social development priorities of urban youth in Zanzibar, whose perceptions reflect the realities of young people navigating transitions in employment and education. The findings show that urban youth conceptualise social development priorities in terms of employment opportunities and freedom of social interaction. They emphasise circumstances that influence decent work, meaningful participation and skills development in social and economic life.

Employment opportunities

Many urban youths see employment opportunities as their primary focus for social development. The results show that young people seek jobs to enhance their freedom, independence, and satisfaction. Employment is the foremost social development priority among the urban youth in Zanzibar. They stated that employment helps meet their needs, supports their siblings, and prevents social vices. Interview responses show that employment is not only a source of income but also a foundation for self-worth, meaningful participation, and social inclusion. During an interview at Jamhuri Garden in Zanzibar, one youth explained the following:

Employment is my priority to earn income to cover my food, shelter, and health needs.

The quotation above indicates that urban youth in Zanzibar view employment as central to prospects and social recognition. Employment provides not only income but also social inclusion, worth, and independence. It makes access to better work a critical pathway for urban youth to achieve resilience, autonomy, and meaningful participation in urban life. Decent and secure work enables young people to support their families, achieve independence, and invest in housing, health, and education. Additionally, social development is closely linked to income and job satisfaction, which motivate urban youth to seek employment actively.

Social interaction among urban youths

Another social development priority for urban youths is the opportunity to engage in social interaction. The urban youths said that building social and economic connections with one another fosters new relationships that enhance happiness rather than lead to social isolation. Beyond recreation, social interactions within youth groups are critical for accessing working opportunities, building social capital, and strengthening youth participation in urban development. One respondent (female youth) was quoted during the interview:

Social interaction helps me share both happiness and problems with society and gain experience in resolving them. The more friends I make, the easier it becomes to solve my problems.

The quotation above shows that social interaction is a vital focus for urban youth in Zanzibar. Young people view social interaction as important for opportunities and confidence, underscoring that essential connections are as critical as employment. Such interactions facilitate skill sharing and empowerment, positioning social connectivity as a central pathway to active participation and youth wellbeing in urban life. Good friends offer emotional support, financial aid, and social happiness, helping individuals enjoy positive experiences even during challenging times. The study also links this view to counselling advice on social interaction and friendship, as quoted from Tyler Oesterle, a psychiatrist (Mayo Clinic Staff, <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/friendships/art-20044860>).

Friendship can significantly impact well-being and health, but it is often challenging to develop or maintain friendships without social interaction. To grasp the significance of social connection in your life, explore social interaction and consider how you can build and sustain lasting friendships.

Theme five: Perceived social development priority of the public servants

The theme explores the social development priorities of public servants in urban Zanzibar, targeting 48 respondents whose perceptions reflect the aspirations and challenges of government employees. Public servants consistently demonstrate that a better working environment and improved incentives are key priorities to their professional performance and well-being.

Better work environment

A better work environment was identified as the fundamental social development priority among public servants who work and live in urban Zanzibar. Respondents highlighted that a well-equipped, organised workplace and a safe environment directly foster motivation and professional satisfaction. Participants emphasised that inadequate resources, overcrowded offices, and poor infrastructure weaken their ability to serve the public effectively, increasing stress and also taking a toll on employees. A supportive work environment is consistently linked to commitment and the capacity to contribute meaningfully to social development, demonstrating that institutional conditions reflect wider governance quality. They mentioned components such as building infrastructure, modern tools, and transport facilities, all of which are vital to accountability, work enjoyment and both professional and social reputations. The interview with registry staff revealed the following note:

For me, my priority is working with less stress. I need active transport to arrive early at the office; I also need tools, a standard office building, and participative management that help me achieve my goals.

The above quotation demonstrates that the elements of the work environment, such as office infrastructure, modern tools, and effective management, foster professional capacities, working confidence and consistently deliver quality services.

FGD with 12 staff, out of whom five are local staff, four mid-level officers, and three senior officers, revealed that a suitable working environment is important for motivation, effective service delivery, and well-being. Participants agreed that limited resources, inadequate facilities, and overcrowded offices hinder performance and increase stress, even among skilled staff. Across all levels, respondents insist that well-equipped and supportive workplaces are a critical engine for key pathways and professional satisfaction in their view of public service as a means of achieving meaningful social development outcomes.

Literature also considers the work environment a social priority across different sectors of work. Perry et al. (2025) found that a better working environment is a key element of employee capacity and crucial for meeting public needs. From a psychosocial perspective, the work environment builds employee behaviour and attitudes through organisational behaviour, leadership style, and collegial relationships (Sharma et al., 2025). Important organisational factors, such as managerial support and job design, are components of the work environment and play vital roles in employees' work experience and confidence (Kalliath & Kalliath, 2012). Overall, improving workplace conditions and relationships can positively impact employees' well-being, with broader consequences for organisational productivity and staff retention.

Better incentives

Employees' incentives are a crucial priority of the social development of public servants. They argued that good incentives meet their needs for both their living conditions and their social and economic well-being. Respondents consistently emphasised that performance-based rewards and reasonable, timely remuneration are important for job satisfaction, motivation, and commitment to public service. Social development occurs when public servants can effectively address social and economic challenges that affect their well-being through reasonable enumeration. During an interview with a public servant at the (ZURA office, the following was explained:

Every employee requires better incentives to improve their standard of living. A good salary should be supplemented with wages and other benefits necessary to help workers reach their savings goals.

The quotation shows that urban public servants view incentives not merely as monetary compensation but also as an acknowledgement of their professional value. When incentives are absent, focus and motivation decline, undermining both the quality of public service and individual well-being.

This underscores that meaningful and fair rewards are essential for enhancing performance, sustaining commitment, and supporting broader social development outcomes. Public servants note that delayed and inadequate incentives increase stress, reduce morale, and limit their ability to perform effectively. Inadequate pay, on the other hand, leads to dissatisfaction and lower motivation at work. Pay gaps can also disrupt workplace relationships and decrease job satisfaction (Chaves et al., 2025). Adequate incentives not only improve performance but also support the well-being of public servants by addressing issues related to their living standards.

5. Conclusion

The study's findings show that the social development priorities of urban residents in Zanzibar are inconsistent and vary across social groups. Each group has its own specific social development priorities. These priorities stem from various factors, including social and economic activities, historical background, culture, political situation, environmental conditions, and the particular period examined. The main agents shaping perceived social development priorities in urban Zanzibar are the government, development partners, and social interaction dynamics.

6. Recommendations

The study recommends that the government and development partners consider convening the Universal Forum, which brings together key representatives from religious and political groups, urban traders, urban youth, public servants, and other development stakeholders to discuss social development priorities. This is because the key social development priorities identified in the findings cut across social groups and institutions.

References

- Adeniran, A. O., Muraina, M. J., & Ngonadi, J. C. (2023). Energy consumption for transportation in Sub-Saharan Africa. In *Achieving net zero* (Vol. 20, pp. 203–231). Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Ahmed, S. K. (2025). Sample size for saturation in qualitative research: Debates, definitions, and strategies. *Journal of Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health*, 5, 100171.
- Alao, O. J., & Dairo, A. O. (2024). The Intersection of Faith and Morality: Exploring the Role of Religious Ethics in Nigeria. *Lead City Journal of Religions and Intercultural Communication*, 2(2), 185-204.
- Aldiabat, K. M., & Le Navenec, C. L. (2018). Data saturation: The mysterious step in grounded theory methodology. *The qualitative report*, 23(1), 245–261.
- Al Matani, A. (2024). *Ethnomusicological research on intangible cultural heritage preservation in Oman* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Birmingham).
- Bowen, J. R. (2020). Muslims through discourse: Religion and ritual in Gayo society.
- Buny, A. A., & Philip, G. D. (2023). Assessing the Effects of Massive Youth Unemployment on Social Well-being: A Lesson from Bor Town Municipality. *Journal for Research on Business and Social Science (ISSN (Online) 2209-7880)*, 6(3).
- Cerf, M. E. (2023). The social-education-economy-health nexus, development and sustainability: perspectives from low-and middle-income and African countries. *Discover Sustainability*, 4(1), 37.
- Chaves-Montero, A., Blanco-Miguel, P., & Ríos-Vizcaíno, B. (2025, Marzo). Analysis of the predictors and consequential factors of emotional exhaustion among social workers: A systematic review. In *Healthcare* (Vol. 13, No. 5, p. 552). MDPI.
- Collord, M., Goodfellow, T., & Asante, L. A. (2021). Uneven development, politics and governance in urban Africa: An analytical literature review.
- Dumitriu, S., Bocean, C. G., Vărzaru, A. A., Al-Floarei, A. T., Sperdea, N. M., Popescu, F. L., & Băloi, I. C. (2025). The Role of the Workplace Environment in Shaping Employees' Well-Being. *Sustainability*, 17(6), 2613.
- FOLORUNSHO, O. P., & SAMUEL, I. R. (2025). Examining the relationship between poor governance and sub-national conflicts in Africa: causes, impacts and policy implications—*International Journal of Humanities, Literature and Art Research*.

- Gansauer, G., Haggerty, J. H., Smith, K. K., Haggerty, M. N., & Roemer, K. F. (2024). Can infrastructure help 'left behind' places 'catch up'? Theorising the role of built infrastructure in regional development. *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, 17(2), 393–406.
- Hakeem, S., Ghauri, S. P., Ahmed, R. R., Streimikiene, D., & Streimikis, J. (2023). Development of social welfare policies in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries: Globalisation and democracy. *Social Indicators Research*, 167(1), 91–134.
- Harris, D. (2021). *The European Social Charter: The Protection of Economic and Social Rights in Europe* (Vol. 25). BRILL.
- Hayden, A., Gaudet, C., & Wilson, J. (Eds.). (2022). *Towards Sustainable Well-Being: Moving beyond GDP in Canada and the World*. University of Toronto Press.
- Hunter, A., & Guiney, F. M. (2020). The quest for equal citizenship: Middle Eastern Christian narratives of migration and inclusion in the United Kingdom. *Mashriq & Mahjar: Journal of Middle East and North African Migration Studies*, 8(1).
- Inglehart, R. (2020). *Modernisation and postmodernisation: Cultural, economic, and political change in 43 societies*. Princeton University Press.
- Ishaque, M. (2025). Islamic Family Ethics: A Pathway to Strengthening Social Harmony in The Modern Era. *Solo International Collaboration and Publication of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 3(02), 247–258.
- Joseph, C., & Leyaro, V. (2022). Gender-differential effects of technical and vocational training: empirical evidence from Tanzania. *Journal of African Development*, 23(2), 294–321.
- Kalliath, T., & Kalliath, P. (2012). Changing work environments and employee wellbeing: an introduction. *International Journal of Manpower*, 33(7), 729–737.
- Larsen, K. (2020). Societal Dismay and Ideological Disarray: Political Reform and Social Dynamics in Zanzibar Town. In *Negotiating Memory from the Romans to the Twenty-First Century* (pp. 167–185). Routledge.
- Leal Filho, W., Tripathi, S. K., Andrade Guerra, J. B. S. O. D., Giné-Garriga, R., Orlovic Lovren, V., & Willats, J. (2019). Using the Sustainable Development Goals to understand sustainability challenges better. *International Journal of Sustainable Development & World Ecology*, 26(2), 179–190.
- Lian, H., & Li, G. (2023). Correlation analysis of retail space and shopping behaviour in a commercial street based on space syntax: a case of Shijiazhuang, China. *Buildings*, 13(11), 2674.
- Lawani, A. (2021). Critical realism: what you should know and how to apply it. *Qualitative research journal*, 21(3), 320–333.
- Lephondo, D. (2021). *Have Mega Housing Projects Achieved What They Set Out to Do?: A Case Study of Savannah City* (Master's thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa).
- Martinez, F. (2022). Organisational change in response to environmental complexity: Insights from the business model innovation literature. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 31(5), 2299–2314.
- Mukanda, S. W., Okoth, P. G., & Lusambili, K. M. (2024). Ethnic Fragmentation & Economic Development: A Multidimensional Exploration of Kenya Since 1963.
- Mutumba, W. W., Webb, W. N., & Kyambade, M. (2025). Ethical behaviour and values-based approach in Uganda's healthcare facility: a framework towards enhancing healthcare performance. *Journal of Work-Applied Management*.
- Nipakasem, M., Mahatthanadull, S., & Piyabhani, P. N. (2024). Characteristics of Buddhist Politicians for Public Interest Devotion in Thai Society. *The Journal of International Buddhist Studies College (JIBSC)*, 10(1-2), 49–65.
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2011). *Creating capabilities: The human development approach*. Harvard University Press.
- Olaniran, A., Madaj, B., Bar-Zeev, S., Banke-Thomas, A., & van den Broek, N. (2022). Factors influencing motivation and job satisfaction of community health workers in Africa and Asia—A multi-country study. *The International journal of health planning and management*, 37(1), 112–132.
- Peña, H. K. V. D., & Galigao, R. P. (2024). Exploring the role of economic education in promoting intergenerational mobility and equality of opportunity.
- Perry, J. L., & Gupta, R. (2025). Cultivating Organisational Culture to Facilitate Public Service Excellence. In *Public Administration in the New Reality* (pp. 39–62). Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore.

- Pham, T. (2018). The capability approach and evaluation of community-driven development programs. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 19(2), 166–180.
- Pitrone, A. (2022). Solidarity in the African System. In *Solidarity in International Law* (pp. 257–281). Routledge.
- Powell, L. (2021). Planning for freedom: From human capital to human capabilities. *Journal of Education (University of KwaZulu-Natal)*, (84), 85–105.
- Rees, W. E. (2021). Achieving sustainability: reform or transformation?. In *The Earthscan reader in sustainable cities* (pp. 22–52). Routledge.
- Scheidecker, G. (2023). Parents, caregivers, and Peers: patterns of complementarity in the social world of children in rural Madagascar. *Current Anthropology*, 64(3), 286–320.
- Sen, A. (1999). *Development as freedom*. Oxford University Press.
- Sharma, K., Joshi, C. K., Boopathy, M. C., Kazmi, S., Arumugam, S., & Attri, R. K. (2025). The Impact Of Organizational Culture On Employee Performance: A Study Of Leadership Styles And Workplace Productivity. *Metallurgical and Materials Engineering*, 205–215.
- Shin, J., Lee, H., Choi, E. K., Nam, C., Chae, S. M., & Park, O. (2021). Social determinants of health and well-being of adolescents in multicultural families in South Korea: Social-cultural and community influence. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 9, 641140.
- Siregar, Z. (2024). The Effect of Education, Health and Social Expenditure Allocations on the Human Development Index (HDI) Level of the City District Aceh Province. *Journal of Environmental and Development Studies*, 5(01), 25-30
- Sumberg, J., Fox, L., Flynn, J., Mader, P., & Oosterom, M. (2021). Africa’s “youth employment” crisis is actually a “missing jobs” crisis. *Development Policy Review*, 39(4), 621-643
- Wang, D., & Li, S. (2025). Social conflicts and their resolution pathways in the commercial renewal of old urban communities in China from a public value perspective. *Journal of Urban*
- Zandt, M. (2022). *SITUATION OF CHRISTIANS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA*. Konrad Adenauer Stiftung.
- Zizzamia, R. (2020). Is employment a panacea for poverty? A mixed-methods investigation of employment decisions in South Africa. *World Development*, 130, 104938.