

**THE INFLUENCE OF LEADERSHIP IN BUILDING INTELLECTUAL HUMILITY
AMONG EMPLOYEES: A CASE STUDY OF MBARARA DISTRICT LOCAL
GOVERNMENT**

DESIRE NABAHINDA

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
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ABSTRACT

This study was guided by three objectives namely; to explore the manifestations of intellectual humility among employees, to explore the dominant leadership style in the organization, to explore the influence of leadership on intellectual humility.

The study adopted a qualitative approach. Employees working at Mbarara District Local Government were eligible to participate in the study. 12 participants who were selected through a point of data saturation principle participated in the study.

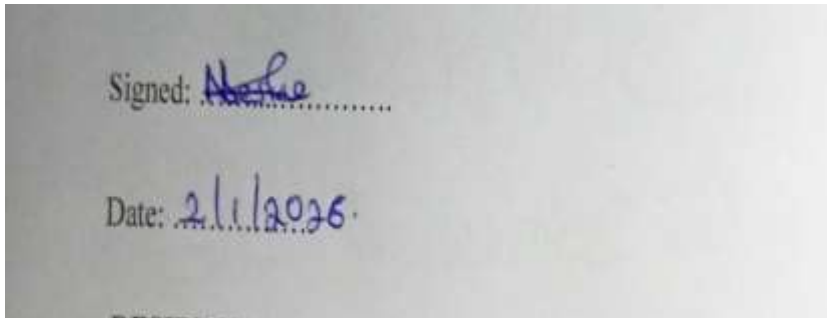
The findings described employees as open to learning from others especially in supportive departments. Only about half of respondents observed employees openly admitting to mistakes.

In addition, other factors including; social environment, individual character emerged to be other factors that influence intellectual humility.

DECLARATION

I, Desire Nabahinda, hereby declare that this research is full of my original work and the best of my knowledge. It has not been submitted or presented for any degree award in this or another university/ institution.

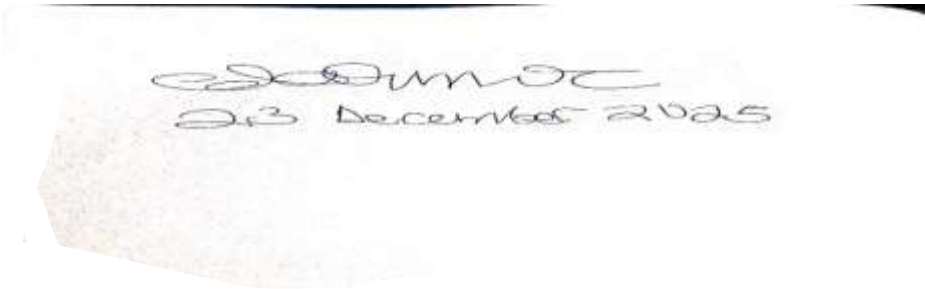
DESIRE NABAHINDA



APPROVAL

I certify that this report has been complied under my supervision and now ready for further examination.

MR. WAWERU ABRAHAM

A photograph of a piece of paper with handwritten text. The signature is written in cursive and appears to be 'Waweru Abraham'. Below the signature, the date '23 December 2025' is written in a similar cursive style. The paper is slightly wrinkled and has a white background.

Waweru Abraham
23 December 2025

DEDICATION

I dedicate this piece of work to all who supported me on my education journey especially my parents, siblings and friends and as well to myself for not giving up.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

In a special way I wish to appreciate my parents for the financial support and my siblings for the love and support they have always given me.

I wish to extend my sincere appreciation to my supervisor Mr. Waweru Abraham and all lecturers who dedicated their time towards the success at this bachelor's level.

I would also like to appreciate my research advisor whose help and support was of great importance towards the completion and success of my report.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CAO	Chief Administrative Officer
CGT	Constructivist Grounded Theory
IH	Intellectual Humility
MDLG	Mbarara District local government
UCU	Uganda Christian University

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives, research questions, scope of the study, significance's, justification of the study and conceptual framework.

1.1 Background to the study

In today's fast-paced and ever-changing work environment, organizations recognize the importance of fostering a culture of learning, growth and collaboration. (Kotter, 2021). One aspect of achieving this is by promoting intellectual humility among employees.

Intellectual humility refers to the ability to recognize the limits of one's knowledge, be open to new ideas and acknowledge the possibility of being wrong (porter *et al.*, 2022).

Research has shown that intellectual humility is linked to various positive outcomes including; improved decision making, increased creativity and enhanced collaboration. (Kashdan and Ciarrochi, 2019). That is to say employees who demonstrate intellectual humility often a times approach problems with an open mind which breeds broad perspectives and new ways, methods, styles and techniques to addressing matters rather than being stuck to the old ways.

Intellectual humility not only contributes to the positive work-related outcome but also personal growth of employees and their emotional intelligence such as promoting empathy, active listening and tolerance for ambiguity (Porter et al., 2022). This at the end of the day gives rise to emotionally intelligent employees with the capability of solving problems in diverse ways with an open mind set. Despite its importance, intellectual humility is often overlooked in organizational settings, where employees may feel pressure to present themselves as experts or avoid appearing uncertain (Edmondson and Lei, 2018).

Other factors that cause intellectual humility to be over looked in organizational setting are the bureaucratic systems and competitive tendencies which often times discourage employees from being open or at worse they are not afforded a plat form to bring forth their ideas.

To add on, exertion of high pressure in certain work places where employees are expected to go over and beyond thereby presenting themselves as experts (Edmondson and Lei, 2018) and as such they are not in position to show their weakness nor acknowledge their mistakes, they develop defensive behaviors which as the end result impede growth, development and innovation.

This study aims to explore the concept of intellectual humility in the workplace, its antecedents and its consequences, specifically, it will investigate the role of leadership in fostering intellectual humility among employees.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Despite the growing recognition of intellectual humility's importance in organizational settings (Potter *et al.*, 2022). There remains a significant gap in understanding how to effectively build and promote intellectual humility among employees.

Previous research has highlighted the benefits of intellectual humility, including improved decision making, increased creativity and enhanced collaboration. However, few studies have explored the specific strategies and interventions that organizations can use to foster intellectual humility among their employees in the Ugandan context. This is despite the fact that intellectual humility is central to the functioning among employees.

On the account of the scholarly gaps on intellectual humility in the Ugandan context, this study sought to explore the possible contribution of leadership style in fostering intellectual humility among employees of Mbarara Local Government.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to explore the possible contribution of leadership in fostering intellectual humility among employees.

1.4 Objectives.

The study was guided by the following objectives;

1. To explore the manifestations of intellectual humility among employees.

2. To explore the dominant leadership style in the organization.
3. To explore the influence of leadership on intellectual humility.

1.5 Research questions.

The study was guided by the following research questions;

1. What manifestations of intellectual humility are there among employees?
2. Which dominant leadership style is in the organization?
3. What is the influence of leadership on intellectual humility?

1.6 Scope of the study.

This scope looked at the geography, content and time scope of the study which was the effect of intellectual humility on performance of employees in the organization.

1.6.1 Geographical scope.

This study was conducted on Mbarara District Local government. The district was formed under the Local Government Act of Uganda (Article 179 (2)). Mbarara District Local Government has its headquarters at Kamukuzi hill approximately 3km from Mbarara town.

1.6.2 Time scope.

The study looked at the information between 2015 and 2024 and was undertaken in four months from September to December, 2025.

1.6.3 Content scope.

The study was to explore the concept of intellectual humility among employees in Mbarara District Local Government, focusing on its manifestations, the dominant leadership style and the influence of leadership on intellectual humility.

1.7 Justification of the study.

This study was justified because;

Limited research: there was limited research on intellectual humility in the Ugandan context, particularly in local government.

Importance of intellectual humility: intellectual humility is essential for effective teamwork, decision making and organizational performance.

Leadership influence: leadership has a strong influence on an organization's culture and the way employees behave where leaders guide the work environment by showing the values and standards they expect others to follow.

1.8 Significances of the study

This study may contribute to; the existing literature on intellectual humility and leadership.

Leadership practices and policies that promote intellectual humility in Mbarara District Local government.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction.

This chapter entails literature concerning the influence of leadership on intellectual humility. It covers origin of intellectual humility, meaning, and characteristics of intellectual humility humble individual, intellectual humility versus intellectual arrogance, key differences between intellectual humility and intellectual arrogance and importance of intellectual humility at work place. Also literature review on intellectual humility from different scholar's works and leadership.

2.1 Origin of intellectual humility.

The idea of intellectual humility dates back to early philosophical thinking, especially Aristotle's concept of the "Golden Mean," which explains humility as the balance between being too confident and being overly doubtful about one's knowledge (Porter *et al.*, 2022). The concept can also be traced to ancient philosophy, particularly the teaching of Socrates, who stressed the value of acknowledging one's own ignorance (Whitcomb *et al.*, 2017).

Following World War II, psychologists began studying dogmatism that is being rigid in beliefs and closed-mindedness more seriously. One important contribution was Adorno's work on the authoritarian personality (Leary, 2018). For instance, Leary *et al.* (2017) developed an Intellectual Humility Scale and found that people with higher intellectual humility tend to be more open-minded, less dogmatic and more sensitive to strong evidence and convincing arguments rather than simply holding on to beliefs (Leary *et al.*, 2017).

In the same way, Krumrei-Mancuso and Steven V. Rouse (2016) developed the comprehensive intellectual humility scale describing intellectual humility as a trait that involves recognizing that one's knowledge can be wrong. It includes being willing to reconsider one's views and respecting other people's opinions. Overall, these theories and research efforts show that intellectual humility has moved from being a philosophical idea to being a measurable psychological trait that can be studied using social and cognitive research methods (Krumrei-Mancuso, 2016).

2.2 Meaning of intellectual humility.

Intellectual humility refers to an individual's recognition that their knowledge and beliefs may be incomplete or inaccurate as well as their openness to learning from others. It involves a willingness to consider alternative viewpoints, acknowledge errors and modify one's opinions when presented with stronger evidence. Rather than indicating weakness of the complexity of knowledge and the limitations of human reasoning.

According to Krumrei-Mancuso and Rouse (2016), intellectual humility includes elements such as respect for differing perspectives, openness to revising one's views and maintaining a balanced sense of confidence.

2.3. Characteristics of an intellectually humble individual.

Intellectually humble individuals typically display a strong willingness to learn. This can be seen in their readiness to ask questions, seek guidance and feedback from others also approach each interaction as an opportunity for learning.

Porter and Schumann (2018) reported that higher levels of intellectual humility were linked to greater openness enhances an individual's intellectual flexibility and reinforces a continuous learning attitude.

In addition, curiosity strengthens the willingness to learn by encouraging individuals to search for new ideas, engage with unfamiliar concepts and expand their understanding. For example Krumrei-Mancuso *et al.* (2019) found that intellectual humility is linked with intellectual curiosity and intellectual engagement, meaning that humble individuals are driven by a genuine desire to learn.

Another key aspect of intellectual humility is open-mindedness which means the person's willingness to consider different viewpoints, re-evaluate their position and engage seriously with ideas that challenge their own. Krumrei-Mancuso and Rouse (2016) developed the Comprehensive Intellectual Humility Scale, which involves openness to revising one's viewpoint as an important dimension of intellectual humility. The authors further suggested that in organizational settings, intellectual humility encourages inclusive discussions and

improves decision making because individuals become less rigid and more willing to accept diverse perspectives

Recognizing personal limitations which involves acknowledging that one's knowledge may be incomplete, incorrect or in need of revision. Church (2017) supports this closely related to non-defensiveness, which refers to an individual's ability to accept critics, feedback and opposing viewpoints without responding with hostility or becoming overly defensive (Porter and Schumann, 2018).

Furthermore, gratitude is frequently observed among individuals with high intellectual humility. Such individuals tend to recognize the contributions of others, value the support they receive and acknowledge that their achievements are partly influenced by interpersonal relationships rather than being purely self-generated (Krumrei-Mancuso, 2017).

Intellectual humility has also been found to predict greater levels of gratitude and other prosocial values within team and organizational environments, these tendencies are reflected through stronger relationships, increased collaboration and reduced ego-driven competition.

In addition, (Krumrei-Mancuso, 2017) identified another key attribute of intellectually humble individuals prioritizing others often described as putting others first. This reflects the relational and altruistic nature of intellectual humility as such individuals tend to consider other people's perspectives, needs and may place group success above personal recognition. Overall, the prosocial outcomes linked to intellectual humility suggest a meaningful relationship between humility and behaviors that promote the wellbeing of others.

When a person shows intellectual humility, they treat others with sincere respect. They understand that every individual, no matter their position, status or achievements has value and something important to contribute. This attitude comes from recognizing that we are not always right and that we do not have complete knowledge of the truth.

Another quality of intellectually humble individuals is modesty this is where they do not feel the need to show off their achievements or social status nor do they constantly try to prove themselves to others. This attitude comes from understanding that their knowledge, abilities or position are not absolute and maybe limited or incomplete. Empirical research describes this aspect of intellectual humility as intellectual modesty versus intellectual vanity (Alfano *et al.*, 2017).

When a person avoids unnecessary boasting, they make room for listening, learning and cooperation instead of trying to compete with or outshine others. This is especially important in personal and group relationships. Modest behavior helps to build trust and encourages open and honest communication. In contrast, arrogance can discourage others from participating or sharing their ideas. From a philosophical perspective humility means caring about having a good intellectual character or reputation but not seeking status or self- praise (Tanesini, 2018).

2.4. Intellectual humility versus intellectual arrogance.

Intellectual humility refers to an individual's recognition that their knowledge and beliefs may be incomplete or inaccurate as well as their openness to learning from others. It involves a willingness to consider alternative viewpoints, acknowledge errors and modify one's opinions when presented with stronger evidence. Individuals with intellectual humility are aware to their own cognitive biases and limitations and they strive to overcome them through self- reflection and learning.

On the other hand, intellectual ignorance refers to having limited knowledge or understanding about a specific topic (Leary *et al.*, 2017). It is often linked to an inflated view of one's own abilities and an unwillingness to consider different perspectives. People who show intellectual arrogance tend to overestimate what they know, dismiss opposing opinions and resist changing their views even when faced with contradictory evidence. This type of overconfidence can slow personal growth and reduce the development of strong critical thinking skills.

Studies also suggest that overconfidence does not steadily increase with knowledge. Instead, people with moderate levels of knowledge may sometimes display the highest levels of overconfidence (Lackner *et al.*, 2019).

2.4.1. Key differences between intellectual humility and intellectual arrogance.

The main difference between intellectual humility and intellectual arrogance lies in recognizing the limits of one's knowledge. Individuals who are intellectually humble understand that their knowledge is incomplete and open to error and they actively seek to learn from others and adjust their beliefs accordingly (Krumrei-Mancuso and Rouse, 2016).

On the other hand, intellectually arrogant individuals usually overestimate their knowledge and fail to recognize their own gaps or biases where overconfidence can interfere with learning and effective social interaction (Lackner *et al.*, 2019).

Another difference is openness to new ideas and perspectives that is People with intellectual humility remain receptive to alternative viewpoints and are willing to change their beliefs when necessary while intellectually arrogant individuals tend to be closed minded, dismiss opposing views and resist information that challenges their existing assumptions (Leary *et al.*, 2017).

Respect for others further differentiates these two traits that is Humble individuals value others contributions and engage in discussions that are cooperative and constructive while arrogant individuals may ignore or belittle others, opinions focusing more on appearing superior than on meaningful dialogue (Krumrei-Mancuso and Rouse, 2016).

Finally, intellectual humility involves continuous self-reflection and personal growth allowing individuals to identify their biases and improve their understanding while Intellectual arrogance is typically characterized by a lack of self-awareness, preventing recognition of errors and limiting intellectual development (Rowatt *et al.*, 2006)

2.5. Importance of intellectual humility at work place.

Leaders who practice intellectual humility help create work environments that encourage innovation and collaboration. In addition, research on high technology teams showed that

humble leadership enhanced employee creativity by strengthening feelings of status and psychological safety.

Intellectual humility also enhances employee engagement. Empirical studies connect humble leadership behaviors with positive employee attitudes. When leaders admit their limitations, seek feedback and appreciate others contributions employees are more likely to feel valued heard and psychologically safe. These positive experiences increase work engagement and job satisfaction. For example a recent study found that intellectual humility in leadership strongly predicted positive workplace attitudes which in turn improved employees' sense of thriving and job performance particularly among younger workers (Gao *et al.*, 2025).

Although many studies do not clearly distinguish employee engagement from general attitudes such as thriving or job satisfaction the underlying mechanism such as leader's openness, encouragement of voice and receptiveness to feedback offers a reasonable explanation. When employees feel that their ideas are appreciated they are more likely to become deeply committed to their work and experience higher levels of motivation and satisfaction. A review that intellectual humility is not only a personal quality or leadership behavior but also a psychosocial resource that strengthens important employee outcomes, including engagement.

Furthermore, intellectual humility plays a valuable role in organizational decision making. Leaders and individuals who demonstrate higher levels of intellectual humility are more open to different perspectives more willing to adjust their views when presented with new evidence and less likely to display overconfidence or rigid thinking. According to a thought-leadership article from the Notre Dame Deloitte Center for Ethical Leadership, being comfortable acknowledging uncertainty and admitting "I don't know" contributes to wiser and more effective decision-making, as it encourages the solicitation of diverse input and mitigates the risks of unchecked certainty. (Frosch *et al.*, 2012). This is also supported by a study with educational leaders showing that intellectual humility was positively related to decision-making, self-esteem and occupational well-being (Naveed *et al.*, 2025).

In their study, (Li, M *et al.*, 2019) found that strong team functioning is grounded in respectful and open communication, psychological safety and mutual trust conditions that are cultivated through intellectually humble leadership and behavior.

Moreover, leaders who demonstrates humility help create a voice supportive climate in which team members feel psychologically safe to express their ideas and concerns. Such an environment is essential for effective collaboration and teamwork (Liu, W *et al.*, 2017).

2.6. Literature review on intellectual humility from different scholar's works.

The study of intellectual humility has emerged as a vibrant, interdisciplinary field spanning philosophy, psychology, education and political science. Scholars generally converge on defining intellectual humility as a virtue characterized by a conscious awareness of the limits of one's knowledge and a willingness to revise one's beliefs in light of new evidence (Ballantyne, 2023).

A study conducted to explore on the impact of intellectual humility on conflicts indicated that people with higher intellectual humility were less likely to be involved in conflicts providing a negative correlation between intellectual humility and conflicts (Ludwig *et al.*, 2022).

Intellectually, humbler people expose themselves to opposing viewpoints, while people with low intellectual humility are unable to face such situations, as they are too narrow-minded to accept the possibility that they might be wrong (De-keersmaecker *et al.*, 2021). Those employees, who possess more intellectual humility, show fewer negative behavior such as fights and conflicts after getting criticized. This study revealed that having a higher Intellectual Humility leads to fewer conflicts, hence providing a negative relationship between the constructs (Danovitch *et al.*, 2019).

People with high intellectual humility have greater openness to other people's views and when someone disagrees with them, they try to understand their viewpoint instead of getting into a conflict (Schumann *et al.*, 2022). Intellectual humility also entails cultivating

a mindset towards other people that is open to dialogue during a conflict. This is directly pointing toward the idea that people with high intellectual humility have low chances of getting involved in conflicts (Krumrei- Mancuso and Rouse, 2016).

The results of another study revealed that people who got high scores on intellectual humility scored low on narcissism. It also indicated that people who recognized their intellectual limitations tended to possess fewer negative feelings and were less likely to be overconfident and narcissistic. They tend to show empathy and are less narcissistic than the latter category (Penner *et al.*, 2022).

Researchers emphasize that humble people accurately assess their own strengths without being overconfident, whereas narcissists are over-confident regarding skills that might not be present in them (Barnhart *et al.*, 2023). Moreover, low intellectual humility also leads to a non-sympathetic grandiose image of self. These results validate the negative association between intellectual humility and narcissism (Kurniawati *et al.*, 2022).

The association between narcissism and interpersonal conflicts was assessed in a study and the results purported that people who scored higher on narcissism also scored higher on interpersonal conflicts with others (Day *et al.*, 2022). The existing literature claims that teachers who are narcissistic and are not open to criticism, show rude behavior to others and have excessive conflicts with people at their workplace (Glock *et al.*, 2018).

2.7. Leadership.

Leadership has been widely conceptualized as the process by which an individual influence a group toward achieving a common goal (Northouse, 2022). Early definitions focused primarily on traits and authority, viewing leadership as a set of personal characteristics that distinguish leaders from non-leaders (Stogdill, 1948). However over time, this understanding has shifted toward viewing leadership as dynamic and relational process that involves interactions, influence and situational factors (Yukl, 2013).

2.7.1. Leadership styles.

Leadership style refers to a way in which a leader conducts themselves, engage with followers and exerts influence to accomplish organizational goals (Yukl, 2019). It involves the leader's patterns of behavior, values and managerial practices that shape that

organizational climate and influence employee performance as well as overall well-being. Consequently, the leadership style adopted plays a critical role in determining organizational effectiveness and long-term success.

Leadership approaches are generally categorized into effective and ineffective style.

2.7.2. Effective leadership styles.

Effective leadership styles are those that contribute to desirable organizational outcomes, including employee engagement, creativity and strong team unity. For examples are transformational, servant, authentic and democratic leadership styles.

Transformational leaders energize and inspire employees by articulating a clear and meaningful vision which stimulates innovative thinking and acknowledging individual efforts and achievements (Bass, 1985).

Servant leadership emphasizes prioritizing employee's needs supporting their growth, development and cultivating a collaborative workplace environment (Greenleaf, 1977).

Authentic leadership emphasizes self-awareness, relational transparency and ethical decision making (Avoid & Gardner, 2005).

2.7.3 Ineffective leadership styles.

Ineffective leadership styles are characterized by authoritarian control, narcissistic tendencies and limited cognitive openness, often leading to adverse consequences for both employees and organizations. For examples autocratic, laissez-faire, narcissistic and toxic leadership approaches.

Autocratic leaders tend to make decisions independently, restricting employee participation and engagement while laissez-faire leaders avoid responsibility and fail to offer adequate direction or feedback (Kellerman, 2004).

Narcissistic leaders usually prioritize personal interests, disregard constructive feedback and weaken collaboration resulting in low employee morale, high turnover rates and broader organizational dysfunction (Padilla et al., 2007).

Moreover. These leadership styles are commonly linked to intellectual arrogance characterized by excessive confidence in one's own knowledge and a reluctance to consider alternative perspectives. Such leaders often silence dissent, discourage learning and contribute to groupthink thereby limiting innovation and reducing overall team performance (Owens and Hekman, 2016; Brown and Trevino, 2006). Recognizing the harmful consequences of these leadership approaches has led scholars to position intellectual humility not only as a desirable leadership quality but also as critical safeguard against the risks associated with ineffective leadership.

2.7.4. Leadership styles that support intellectual humility.

Intellectual humility has increasingly been recognized as an essential quality of effective leadership, as it helps leaders promote collaboration, innovation and continuous learning with organizations (Owens and Hekman, 2016; Gao and Niu, 2025).

Leaders who demonstrate intellectual humility acknowledge the limits of their knowledge actively seek feedback and appreciate diverse viewpoints. Some leadership style are especially effective in nurturing intellectual humility in organization settings.

Servant leadership, for example focuses on meeting the needs of team members and emphasizes empowerment, growth and personal development (Greenleaf, 1977). By fostering a supportive and trusting work environment that encourages collaboration, servant leader's exhibit intellectual humility. They value different perspectives, remain open to feedback and cultivate a culture of learning and ongoing improvement.

Transformational leadership motivates and inspires employees to exceed their individual capabilities by creating a shared vision, fostering development and encouraging innovation (Bass, 1985). Leaders who adopt this approach demonstrate intellectual humility by recognizing their own limitations and actively inviting contributions from others. By doing so they build a collaborative and innovative organizational climate that improves employee involvement and overall organizational performance (Bass and Riggio, 2006; Owens and Hekman, 2016).

Democratic leadership, on the other hand emphasizes shared decision- making and involves team members in discussions, idea generation and problem-solving activities. Leaders who practice this style appreciate diverse viewpoints and encourage openness, transparency and

inclusiveness. Through actively seeking input and remaining open to feedback, democratic leaders display intellectual humility and enhance trust and teamwork within groups (Gastil, 1994; Somech, 2006).

2.7.5. The influence of leadership on intellectual humility.

Leadership plays an important role in developing intellectual humility in organizations. Leaders influence workplace culture, values and expectations. When leaders model behaviors such as openness, willingness to learn and ethical conduct, they encourage team members to develop similar attitudes. This helps promote collaboration, innovation and continuous improvement within the organization (Owens and Hekman, 2016; Gao and Niu, 2025).

Furthermore, Leadership that promotes openness and inclusion strengthens intellectual humility that is when leaders encourage team members to share different opinions and perspectives, they reduce conflicts and create an environment where respectful discussion and constructive debate are welcomed. This supports critical thinking and teamwork within the organization (Van Tongeren *et al.*, 2018; DeRue *et al.*, 2011).

Studies show that servant leadership improves team unity, employee engagement and shared learning thereby promoting a culture of intellectual humility (Greenleaf, 1977; Liden *et al.*, 2014).

Transformational leaders inspire and motivate employees to exceed their potential, encouraging creativity and innovation. By recognizing the limits of their own knowledge and seeking input from team members, transformational leaders' model intellectual humility and foster a culture of collaboration, adaptability, and continuous improvement (Bass, 1985; Bass and Riggio, 2006; Owens and Hekman, 2016).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0. Introduction

This chapter presents the methodological choices that were used by the researcher to guide the study. Specifically, the chapter consists of the research design, sample size and sampling techniques, data collection methods, data analysis and ethical considerations.

3.1. Research design

The study applied descriptive survey research design. Descriptive research design is a type of research design that aims to systematically obtain information to describe a phenomenon, situation or population (Voxco, 2021). More specifically, it helped to answer the what, when, where and how questions regarding the research problem. The study used a qualitative approach to describe the situation because it allows an in-depth collection of data.

3.2. Constructivist grounded theory.

In this study, constructivist grounded theory was adopted. The Constructivist grounded theory entailed systematic data collection and analysis to identify patterns, concepts and themes emerging from the data itself, without preconceived theories. A researcher who purely uses constructive grounded theory, employs a systematic data collection and analysis to identify patterns, concepts and themes emerging from the data itself, without preconceived theories (Chun Tie *et al.*, 2019). As a process, constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT), is an improved version of Grounded theory and was advanced by Charmaz (2006).

3.3. Target population.

The population of the study included the employees working with Mbarara District Local Government. These included administrative officers and other staff members from different departments such as finance, planning and community-based services.

3.4. Sample size.

In qualitative studies, the sample size is rarely predetermined. In this particular study, there are respondents that participated in semi-structured interviews while others participated in structured interviews. The participants in each category of the respondents, were selected on point of data saturation principle. In total, the point of data saturation was reached on the 12th respondent. Therefore, the total participants were 12.

The table below shows participants and their respective information.

Number	Name (pseudo)	Gender
1	Alexa	F
2	Bonnie	M
3	Quan	M
4	Dan	M
5	Ellan	M
6	Feby	F
7	Gillian	F
8	Sam	M
9	Ian	M
10	Jackie	F
11	Kenneth	M
12	Mallen	F

3.5. Sampling method.

Non-probability sampling methods were employed, specifically purposive sampling techniques, to select the respondents for this study. A purposive technique ensures that the invited participants have experience working with Mbarara Local government and therefore are the best suited to respond to research questions. This technique employs an inclusion-exclusion criterion. Due to the level of sensitivity of the topic, Snowball sampling technique was also used as well. Snowball was employed to the identified employees who were not willing to participate, they made a referral to another employee who were available and willing.

3.6. Data collection tools and the process

Semi-structured interviews and structured interviews were employed for data collection. An interview guide is a structured list of topics and open-ended questions used by an interviewer to direct a conversation, ensure consistency across interviews, and gather detailed information from participants.

Each of the respondents answered the preset questions and then added the information that deemed appropriate. The interviews were conducted in English and as per the participant's period of availability.

The interviews took approximately 20-30 minutes. English was the common language used and Runyankole in the mix while emphasizing a particular point.

3.7. Researcher's Role

In qualitative study, the researcher's role is important since a researcher is part of research instrument. In this process, the researcher may introduce own bias depending on their previous knowledge and interaction with the phenomenon of interest. It is thus a requirement that researcher lays bare any possible source of bias and demonstrate the measures they took to avoid bias.

In this study, the researcher is a student at Uganda Christian University. In the process the researcher has understood the research process and is well aware of some factors that influence intellectual humility.

Researcher's role in qualitative research is critical since a researcher is part of the instrument and therefore a possible cause of bias. Such bias may arise, on the possibility of the researcher to bring their values and biases emanating from their backgrounds and experiences, a situation that have implications on the quality of research. It is thus required that a researcher in a qualitative study, lays bare the possible biases and adopt strategies that reduce the biases.

In this study, the researcher undertook own data collection. To avoid bias, the researcher avoided leading questions, but instead allowed the interviewees to provide their own account of the phenomenon of interest without interruptions. Equally, after every interview, the researcher reread the points noted down to the interviewee for the purpose of member checking and all the participants acknowledged that what was written was a true record.

Trustworthiness of results

In qualitative establishing rigor is established through trustworthiness. There are long standing principles that were developed by Lincoln and Guba in 1985 which guides qualitative researchers on the appropriate strategies to foster trustworthiness. These strategies include, (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) conformability and were followed by the researcher in this study as elaborated hereafter.

Dependability

Dependability is advanced as the quality of consistency of the finding over time if similar research was conducted by different researchers (Lim, 2024). To ensure that this study meets dependability test, an in-depth rich account of the methodology, the process employed to recruit the respondents, and the steps employed in conducting the research is presented. As such, another researcher who can follow the same steps may arrive at similar findings.

Credibility

Credibility accounts for the truth value of conclusions made from the research. It is thus expected that the findings are truthful (Morgan, 2024). To ensure this was achieved, triangulation with other available documents was made and prolonged engagement with the participants was made. In conducting interviews, the researcher made a prolonged engagement with the participants and this provided room for a mutual understanding and this enhanced positive responses from the participants.

Confirm ability

Confirm ability relates to the account presented findings being the participants account and not the researchers own reflection (Stalmeijer et al., 2024). This attempts to ensure that a degree of objectivity is achieved. In order to ensure this was achieved, member checking through re-reading the points noted down during interviews to the participants was done. The participants confirmed that the recorded points were the true account. Again, some of the raw extracts from the interviews are presented to support the themes presented. Equally, a detailed account on the whole process involved in the collection, analyzing and interpreting the data is presented. In addition, the researcher has provided own bias under the researcher's role that might have influenced the research outcome.

Transferability

Transferability is the possibility of the findings of the study being transferred to other contexts or being generalized (Drisko, 2025). Qualitative studies are mainly not generalizable, and this study did not aim at achieving results that can be generalized. Instead the study aimed at providing the account of the respondent's own views and experience with academic writing digital tools.

In qualitative study, analytical generalizability is possible (Babbie, 2020). This involves critical assessment of the degree to which a study's findings can be utilized in another setting. For that to be possible, the researcher is expected to provide adequate evidence in a rich detailed form. In this study, the researcher attempted to provide detailed account of the finding and the themes that emerged and hence, it is hoped that the reader can carry a critical analysis and find out whether it is applicable in another setting. It is therefore, upon

readers of this work to decide for themselves whether or not the results are transferable to other circumstances.

3.8. Data analysis.

The process of methodically using statistical or logical tools to describe, illustrate, condense, and analyze data is known as data analysis (Michae 2015”) in this study, as was common with qualitative studies, data analysis was conducted both during the interviews and after the interviews. During the interviews, it was important to analyze the nonverbal responses that were not captured in recording or note taking that were important to the study. Such nonverbal cues could be in such terms as adjusting of one’s voice, facial expressions, and use of hands among others which were used to emphasize the importance of a point or even supplement the points made.

Additionally, after the completion of an interview, the emerging themes were highlighted. Once the whole exercise of data collection was done, a retreat to a quiet place was done and review made to the transcribed data, undertake content analysis as well as narrative analysis to find the aspects that fit in the data.

3.9 Ethical considerations.

Ethical consideration entails undertaking care to control potential moral concerns around the research process, the role and values of the researcher and the rights and obligations of the participants.

3.9.1. Letter of introduction.

The researcher obtained a letter from the School of Business, Uganda Christian University to introduce the researcher to the field and also seek permission to collect data from Mbarara Local Government.

3.9.2. Approval letter.

The researcher obtained an introduction letter from the office of the Chief Administrative officer of Mbarara District local government which allowed her to conduct research that is interviews.

3.9.3. Informed consent from participants.

Accordingly, the participants to this study were invited on a voluntary basis and they were required to sign a consent agreement. The rights of the participants including confidentiality, anonymity and voluntary participation and the right to withdraw from the interview at any time without providing a reason were also communicated to the respondents. Permission was requested to record the interviews. In addition, a disclosure that the study was purely academic was made.

3.9.4. Confidentiality.

Participants were assured that information would only be used for study purposes and not disclosed to others. Upon completion of interviews, a debriefing was undertaken and participants were allowed to ask questions, make comments, or add information that was not discussed during the interview.

3.9.5. Gender considerations (gender sensitivity required).

This study considered both male and female participants. This was because both male and female are employees of Mbarara District Local Government and their responses were critical in drawing conclusions and recommendations at the end of the study.

3.10. Limitations.

This study purely adopted a qualitative approach and as such, the findings were not generalizable.

Since the study was to be conducted on working days, some respondents were occupied and failed to participate in the interviews, hence limited responses.

Additionally, the study was costly in terms of printing, binding, transport to the field, data collection and analysis, hence requiring a comprehensive budget.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

4.0. Introduction

This chapter presents presentation and analysis of the study findings collected from various categories of respondents in line with specific study objectives.

4.1 Manifestations of Intellectual Humility among employees

This section relates to objective one that aimed at manifestations of intellectual humility among employees. In general, the findings revealed that a cross interviews, employees demonstrated a wide spectrum of attitudes toward learning from others. For many, learning was described as a collaborative and necessary component of their work.

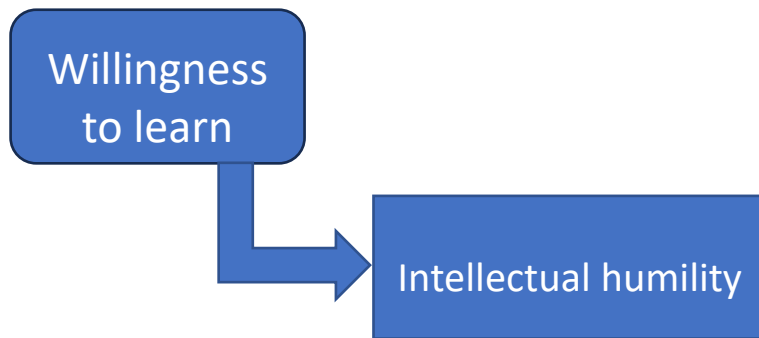
Learning Posture

The study revealed that some staff readily seek information, ask for help and consult colleagues when faced with unfamiliar tasks. They further framed learning as a collective responsibility that leads to institutional good performance.

In response to the learning attitude among employees, one respondent noted:

“Learning has never ended and if I always tell my colleagues, if you don’t know something, ask. None of us knows everything here.”

From the findings, it was observed that a big of employees showed a persistent tendency to show competence even when they lacked necessary knowledge. This was especially common among junior staff who feared being perceived as incompetent.



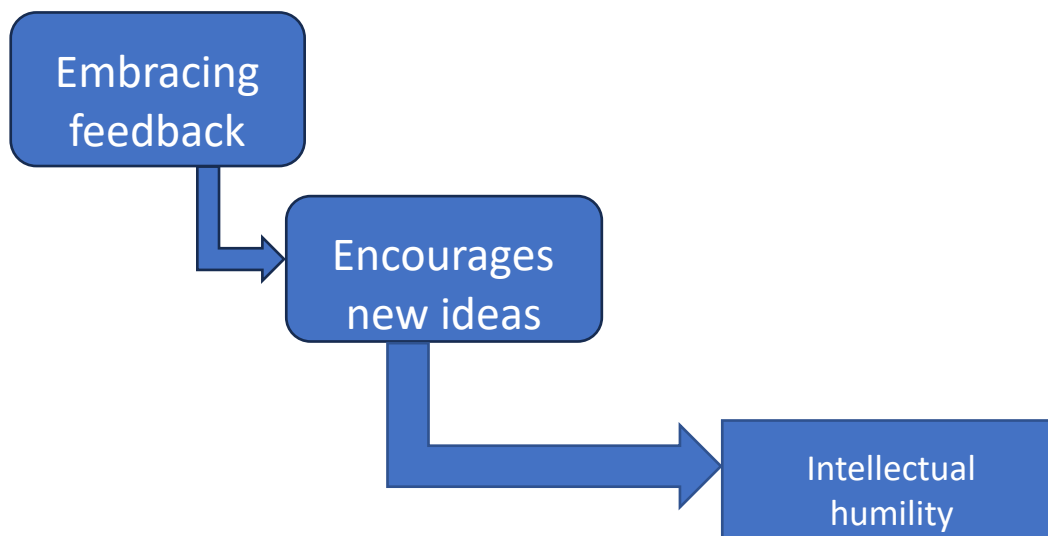
Responses to Challenge and Feedback

The study findings indicated that participants described mixed reactions to feedback, often distinguishing between theoretical acceptance and actual behavior. Results indicated that most staff articulated that feedback is important and necessary, however, actual practice revealed defensive tendencies.

From the responses, one of the administrators noted:

“Here, some employees receive corrective feedback gracefully and even seek clarification, others respond with silence, withdrawal while others with indirect avoidance.

It was also found out that a few staff members were described as interpreting feedback as personal criticism rather than an opportunity for improvement. The defensiveness often stemmed from fear of being judged or blamed, especially in departments where audits and performance reports are heavily analyzed. This limits staff willingness to admit mistakes, ask questions and acknowledge gaps in their operations.



Admitting limitations

Recognizing and acknowledging one's own knowledge gaps or mistakes was found to be important aspects for employees to be considered humble and subsequently improve their performance.

In respect to this, one respondent noted:

“An employee sends a report with an error and the supervisor calls to discuss it. And the employee graceful response as “thank you for bringing this to my attention and take full responsibility for the error in the figures”. **(Interview extract)**

Structural and Cultural Barriers to Intellectual Humility

According to the study findings, employees identified several barriers that make it difficult for staff to express intellectual humility which subsequently affects performance. These barriers were both institutional and cultural. The highlighted barriers were a summary of many challenges which cut across all the departments of the district.

Workload and time pressure

Findings indicated that high workloads assigned to employees and multiple tasks sometimes create a culture of working on pressure hence leaving little room for reflection and collaborative learning among staff. During an interview, one of the respondents from the community-based department said;

“Sometimes the pressure becomes too much and I aim at getting things done especially during assessments, and field works, in such a situation humility in terms willingness to learn, admitting mistakes among others is gone hence poor performance.”

Fear of reprimand

The study revealed that some departments were described as operating under a punitive audit culture whereby some staff members feared repercussions associated with admitting mistakes or reporting uncertainties.

One procurement officer shared: “If you admit an error, it might appear in the next audit and people don’t want trouble.”

Hierarchical norms

According to information obtained during the study, the strong respect for authority in local government sometimes discourages junior staff from challenging senior staff or offering alternative ideas. Therefore, the combination of these structural and cultural barriers reduces psychological safety and limit opportunities for staff to express humility thus affecting the quality of decisions and the timely delivery of services.

4.2 Dominant Leadership Styles

This section provides responses from objective two of the study. The objective sought to assess the various dominant leadership styles and how they have influenced intellectual humility. In general, the finding revealed that;

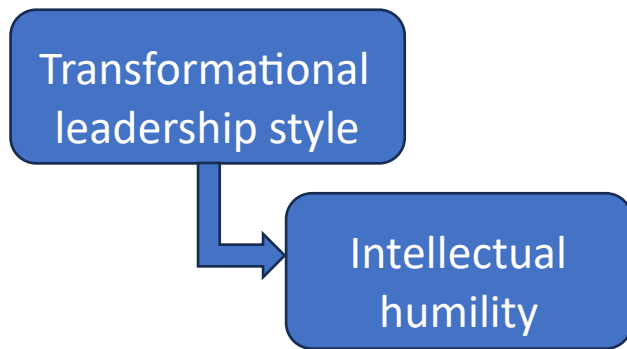
Transformational Leadership

The results on the approach of leaders when making decisions consistently show that leadership is primarily top-down.

Employees noted that participative leaders foster a positive climate in which admitting uncertainty is not equated with incompetence. These leaders encourage collaborative problem solving and reduce hierarchical barriers.

On the other hand, authoritarian leaders were described as limiting staff voice and lowering humility expressions. Staff working under rigid, top-down supervisors feared voicing their thoughts or acknowledging mistakes because doing so could be interpreted as weakness.

This directly affected performance where leaders acted humbly, staff participation increased, learning cycles improved, and errors were corrected earlier. Where leaders were authoritarian, staff withheld information, avoided engagement, and sometimes repeated mistakes.



Communication Patterns

This was noted from the findings that communication at Mbarara District Local Government is largely formal and hierarchical. They argued that while some department heads are approachable, the majority maintain professional distance which limits open dialogue.

Feedback from leaders tends to be directive rather than conversational.

4.3 Influence of Leadership on Intellectual Humility

This section relates to objective three that aimed at the influence of leadership on intellectual humility. In general, the finding revealed that;

Openness to feed back

Research participants during the study, frequently linked humility to higher work performance. Findings indicated that staff who admitted not knowing, asked for clarification and sought for assistance were found to be completing tasks more accurately and efficiently. They further emphasized that staff who practiced humility had better communication, fewer repeated mistakes and stronger coordination.

One respondent from the planning unit observed that:

“When we discuss openly through either a meeting or between individuals, even if someone made a mistake, the plan becomes stronger and implementation becomes easy for the involved stakeholders and this improves performance.”

Findings indicated that younger staff members were described as more open to feedback, while senior employees often prefer maintaining autonomy. A few participants described supervisors who frame feedback as a dialogue, which encourages humility.

Recommendations to promote humility among employees Acknowledge mistakes and vulnerabilities.

Encourage open communication and transparency

On the recommendations to promote humility, respondents suggested that there is need to establish norms where employees feel safe to speak up, share concerns and offer new ideas without fear of retribution. Transparent decision-making processes also build trust.

Other factors that influence intellectual humility

According to the study findings, it was found out that there are other factors apart from leadership styles which positively and negatively influence intellectual humility at Mbarara district local government. These included;

Social environment.

Findings indicated that a supportive social environment creates an atmosphere where employees feel comfortable to share and exchange ideas necessary for development.

In response to this, one of the respondents said that;

“with my five years of experience working here, I have experienced the social relationship among the staff, for example through get together and end of year celebrations and social media platforms like What’s-app which all have modified our understanding and reaction towards learning new aspects.

Individual character

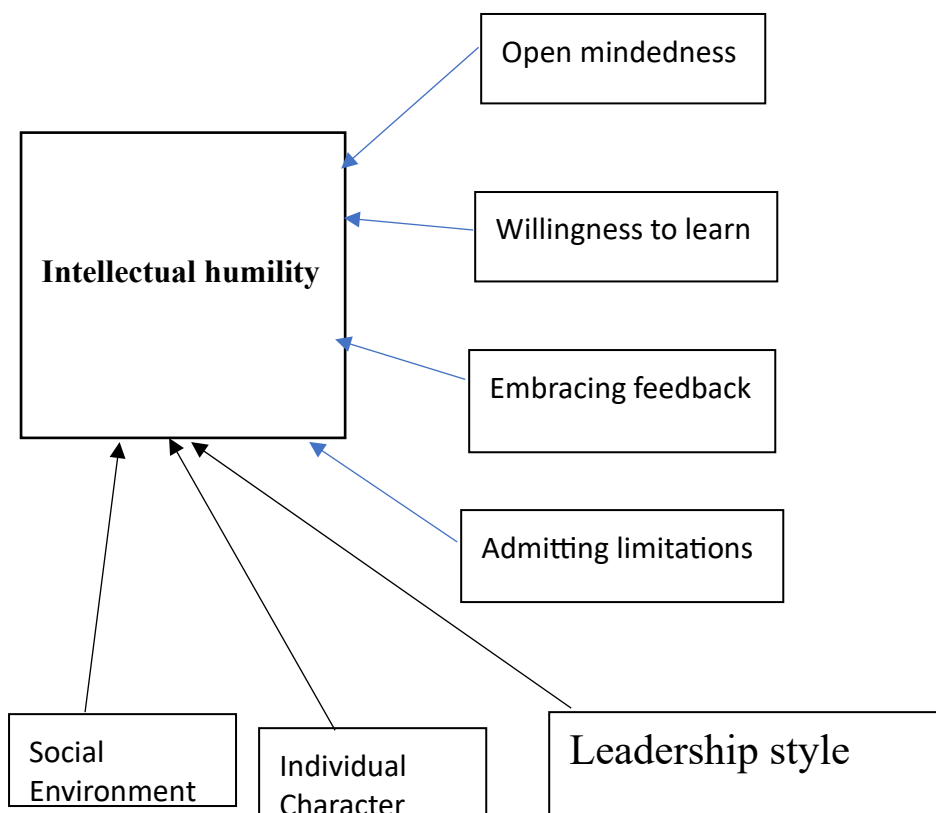
This refers to the personal beliefs, behaviors and lifestyle. During the study at Mbarara district local government, it was found out that character greatly influences how people talk, behave, respond and socialize both at work and outside. For example, on the point

openness to learning as one of the manifestations of intellectual humility, findings indicated that people with bad characters tend to reject corrections openly before their seniors.

In support to this finding, one respondent stated that; “I have seen some of our staff members here talking rudely to their supervisors after being corrected”.

Extracted framework

Incorporating all the information collected, the following framework has been extracted



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter interprets the findings on intellectual humility among employees, dominant leadership styles and how leadership influences humility in Mbarara District Local Government. The conclusions and recommendations are based on the results obtained from the field.

5.1 Summary of findings

5.1.1 Manifestations of Intellectual humility among employees

The participants generally described employees as open to learning from others, especially in supportive departments. This aligns with Krumrei-Mancuso and Rouse's (2016) view that intellectual humility is expressed through receptiveness to new information and sensitivity to one's cognitive limitations. The finding that younger employees were more open to feedback echoes Vaughan et al. (2020), who argue that intellectual humility tends to be higher in individuals with fewer entrenched professional identities.

5.1.2 Dominant Leadership Styles in the Organization

The data revealed a dominant authoritarian–participative hybrid leadership style, with many leaders relying on top-down decision-making while selectively involving staff. Similar results were documented by Vigoda-Gadot (2007) in public sector organizations, where decision-making authority is often centralized due to bureaucratic constraints.

Employees reported limited involvement in planning and policy-level decisions. Such findings are consistent with Denhardt and Denhardt (2015) who describe local government units as traditionally leader-centered, with participation occurring mainly at the operational rather than strategic level.

The observed formal and hierarchical communication patterns support House et al. (2004) and the GLOBE study, which note that public sector leadership in collectivist and bureaucratic cultures tends to preserve professional distance. While a few departments showed more relational warmth, these were exceptions, suggesting leadership behavior varies significantly across units.

5.1.3 Influence of leadership on intellectual humility

One of the most consistent findings was that leadership style strongly influences employees' willingness to admit mistakes or accept feedback. This directly supports Edmondson's (1999) concept that psychological safety is largely leader-driven. Employees in departments with supportive, approachable leaders displayed more humility-related behaviors.

Participants emphasized that when leaders acknowledge their own limitations, employees feel encouraged to do the same. This reinforces the findings of Owens & Hekman (2016), who argue that humble leadership positively predicts follower learning orientation, engagement, and honesty. Conversely, leaders who project infallibility generate fear, resulting in concealment of mistakes.

Leadership influence appears to extend beyond individual behavior into broader cultural patterns. Transformational and participative leaders help cultivate a culture of collaboration and respect attributes shown in Bass and Riggio (2006) to increase openness and reduce

bureaucratic rigidity. This supports the idea that intellectual humility thrives not only through individual personality but through contextual and cultural reinforcement.

Participants recommended that leaders adopt more participative styles, improve communication transparency, and engage staff more actively in decision-making. These recommendations align with the public administration literature, particularly New Public Service theory (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2000), which emphasizes collaboration, shared responsibility, and citizen-centered leadership.

5.2 Conclusion

The study concludes that building intellectual humility is essential for improving employee relationships, organizational learning, public accountability and service delivery within Mbarara District Local Government.

Intellectual humility can be cultivated through targeted training, leadership modelling, transparent governance systems and community involvement. The findings indicate that employees become more effective, more collaborative, and more ethical when placed in environments that value openness, reflection and shared decision-making.

5.3 Recommendations

Basing on the study findings, the following recommendations were made;

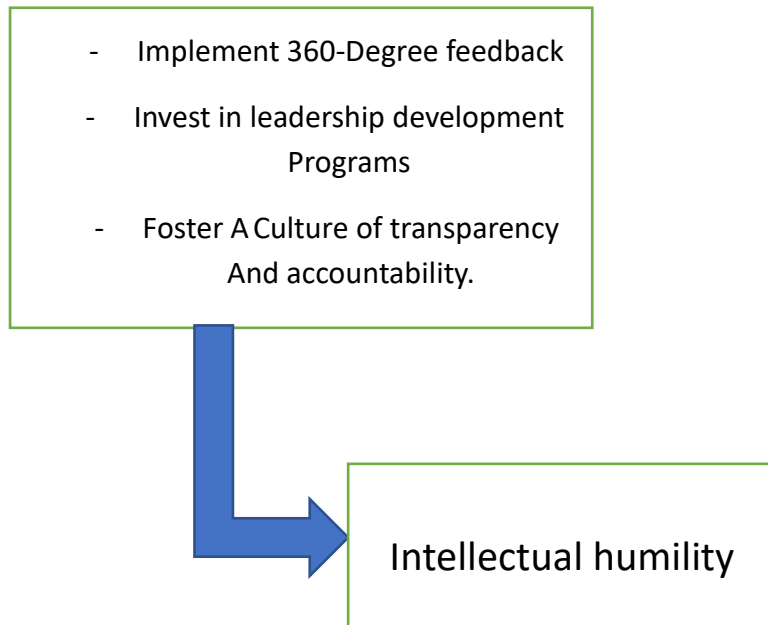
Invest in leadership development programs by providing training and workshops on ethical leadership skills.

Emphasize emotional stability and empathy that is develop leadership characteristics that promote emotional stability, empathy and good communication skills.

Forster a culture of transparency and accountability by encouraging open discussion, regular feedback and inclusive decision – making processes to promote a culture of transparency and accountability.

Implement 360-Degree feedback that is use 360- degree feedback mechanisms to evaluate employee performance and provide constructive feedback for growth and development.

Incorporating all the recommendations from the findings, the following framework has been extracted.



5.4 Areas for further research

Despite the interesting finding and implications that emerge from this research as far as intellectual humility and performance is concerned, it is important to recognize its importance and need for additional research.

Due to the advancement in technology, this area of research is likely to continue to be rich in focusing others like; intellectual curiosity, growth mindset and resilience and psychological safety in teams.

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APPENDIX I: CONSENT FORM

Dear participant,

My name is Nabahinda Desire student of Uganda Christian University carrying out research on “the effect of intellectual humility on employees in the organization”. By participating in this study, you will draw the attention of intellectual humility to improve employee performance in an organization.

Confidentiality: If you agree to participate in this study, the information obtained during the study will be kept confidential and only be accessible to the researcher and the supervisors. Your name is also not needed in order to participate in the study.

Benefits: Information obtained from you, will be used by Mbarara District Local Government and various professional bodies. This will help to improve on the quality of services offered by employees. However, there will be no monetary compensation for your participation in this study.

Voluntary consent: You are free not to participate in the study and you have the right to refuse answering any question that you feel uncomfortable with. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any time you feel uncomfortable. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any time without fear of any consequences. By signing below, it indicates that you voluntarily give your consent to participate in the study.

Signature of the respondent Date.....

Signature of the researcher..... Date.....

APPENDIX II: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR EMPLOYEES

Dear respondent,

I am Nabahinda Desire a student of Uganda Christian University carrying out research on “The effect of intellectual humility on employees in the organization”. Thank you for participating in this study. The purpose of this interview is to understand experiences and perceptions regarding intellectual humility and leadership styles among employees within Mbarara District Local Government.

Section A. Demographic Information

1. What is your current position in the organization?
2. How long have you worked with Mbarara District Local Government?
3. What department do you belong to?

Section B. Manifestations of Intellectual Humility among Employees

1. How would you describe the general attitude of employees towards learning from others in your organization?
2. In your experience, how do employees respond when their ideas or opinions are challenged?
3. Can you share an example where an employee admitted not knowing something or accepted correction gracefully?
4. How open are staff members to feedback and new perspectives?
5. Are there any barriers that make it difficult for employees to display intellectual humility?

Section C. Dominant Leadership Styles in the Organization

1. How would you describe the general approach of leaders in this organization when making decisions?

2. Would you say leaders here are more participative, authoritarian, transformational, or laissez-faire? Please explain.
3. How do leaders engage employees in problem-solving and planning processes?
4. How often do leaders seek input or feedback from staff before implementing policies or decisions?
5. What kind of relationship exists between leaders and subordinates?

Section D. Influence of Leadership on Intellectual Humility

1. How does leadership behavior influence how employees express their opinions or admit mistakes?
2. Do you think leadership style affects how employees value others' ideas and expertise? Please explain.
3. What improvements in leadership practices could strengthen intellectual humility among employees?
4. Is there anything else you would like to add about leadership or intellectual humility in this organization?
5. What recommendations would you make to promote humility among employees within the local government?

Thank you for your contributions.



UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

A Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa

School of Business
160 C/AO
Mbarara District Local Government
P.o.Box 001
Kamukkuzi ,Mbarara
Mbarara District

The Human Resource Manager

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: Introduction of Ms.NABAHINDA DESIRE, M23B42/035 for Data Collection Permission

I am writing to introduce Ms.Nabahinda Desire, a Bachelor of Human Resource Management student at Uganda Christian University. Ms. Nabahinda is currently in the advanced stage of her academic journey and is conducting a dissertation on "Building Intellectual Humility among Employees in an Organization ."

I assure you that Ms. Nabahinda will adhere to all ethical guidelines and treat any data collected with the utmost confidentiality. She is a responsible student dedicated to conducting a thorough and rigorous study.

We kindly request your support in granting Ms. Nabahinda access to relevant data and personnel within any department and as well as any personnel with objective knowledge regarding her topic. Your valuable insights will significantly contribute to the success and quality of her research.

Thank you for considering her request. Should you require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me on the address provided here below.

Sincerely,

Mukisa Simon Peter
Lecturer and undergraduate
Research coordinator UCU School of Business
Email smukisa@ucu.ac.ug Mob. 0752938600



Telephone:

Office:

Chief Administrative Officer: 0788121681
Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

Our Ref: CRI/164/2



MBARARA DISTRICT LOCAL GOVERNMENT
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER'S OFFICE
P.O. BOX 1,
MBARARA UGANDA

17th November 2025

Lecturer and Undergraduate

Uganda Christian University
Research Coordinator UCU School of Business
PO Box 4
MUKONO

PERMISSION GRANTED TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Reference is made to your letter dated **10th November 2025** introducing the student **Ms. Nabahinda Desire** to conduct research on "*Building Intellectual Humility among Employees in an Organization in Mbarara District.*"

This is to inform you that permission has been granted to her to conduct research in Mbarara District under supervision of Principal Human Resource Officer.

By copy of this letter, the Human Resource Officers are requested to accord her with the necessary information related to her research.


Tinka Betty Kemigisa  For: CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER
MBARARA DISTRICT LOCAL
GOVERNMENT

For: **CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER**

Copy to: - The District Chairperson/Mbarara District
The Principal Human Resource Officer/Mbarara District
Ms . Nabahinda Desire-Student /UCU-Mukono

Desire Nabahinda

**THE INFLUENCE OF LEADERSHIP IN BUILDING
INTELLECTUAL HUMILITY AMONG EMPLOYEES**

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Desire Nabahinda

**THE INFLUENCE OF LEADERSHIP IN BUILDING
INTELLECTUAL HUMILITY AMONG EMPLOYEES**

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