

# Servant Leadership And Organization Performance Of Faith Based Self Help Groups In Kirinyaga County

Racheal Mugure<sup>1</sup> Charles Githira<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> School of Business, Thika TVET. <sup>2</sup> School of Business, KCA University.

Corresponding Author: [rmugure07@yahoo.com](mailto:rmugure07@yahoo.com)

## Abstract

Organization performance has attracted attention in profit and non-profit organizations. In the current sporadic, complicated and dynamic business environment the need for swift and accurate decision making cannot be ignored. In response to it organizations have adopted servant leadership approach. Despite of its attractiveness its contribution in faith-based organization is inconclusive. Hence, the current study examined the effect of servant leadership on organization performance. Specifically, the study examined the effect of empowerment, stewardship, role modeling and compelling vision on the effect of organization performance in faith-based self-help groups in Kenya in Kirinyaga County. The study was anchored on Green leaf leadership theory. Primary data was sourced using questionnaires among 80 respondents. Descriptive and inferential statistics analyzed the data. It was documented that servant leadership has positive and significant effect on organizational performance of faith-based self-help groups in Kenya in Kirinyaga County. There is need for adoption of leadership styles which are in response to the needs of respective faith-based groups.

**Key words:** Empowerment, stewardship, role modelling, compelling, organization performance.

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## Introduction

A faith-based organization is one whose values are based on faith and/or beliefs, which has a mission based on social values of the particular faith, and which most often draws its activists (leaders, staff, volunteers) from a particular faith group. These religious organizations represent essential players in the third sector and the social economy in areas such as exclusion, disease, and education. The purpose of these organization lies in the services they carry out, and also in how they provide their activities, which transmits their character and charisma.

The employees in these entities are a critical component of these institutions because they share the values of the organization and help them to fulfill their mission of transmitting specific values while providing a service. They are also key to ensuring the quality of services provided by these organizations and, therefore, to achieving long-term sustainability and viability. The style of leadership exercised in these organizations is critical to their long-term survival (Barrow, 1977).

Servant leadership is one of the leadership styles most consistent with faith based religious entities since it implies an approach based on moral values and ethical principles (Ortiz-Gómez et. al., 2020; Spears & Wiley, 1998) as well as on religious teachings (Keith, 2015). It is related to Judeo-Christian philosophical traditions (Reinke, 2004). Servant leadership is a management strategy that prioritizes and turns workers' needs into objectives, putting employees' good above the leader's self-interest and showing concern for others (Eva, 2019; Liden, 2014). Although followers are the main focus of servant leaders, most attention in leadership theory is on leaders instead of followers. However, the perception of the employees is what is going to determine their attitudes.

Servant leadership is a holistic leadership approach that engages followers in multiple dimensions (e.g., relational, ethical, emotional, spiritual), such that they are empowered to grow into what they are capable of

becoming. It seeks first and foremost to develop followers on the basis of leaders' altruistic and ethical orientations (Greenleaf, 1977). When followers' well-being and growth are prioritized, they in turn are more engaged and effective in their work. Servant Leadership philosophy offers a different perspective from traditional authoritarian styles of leadership and instead focuses on sharing of power and control with those the leader is responsible for so that they can reach their full potential. Servant Leaders are leaders who put other people's needs, aspirations, and interests above their own. Servant leaders see themselves as stewards of the organizations (Van, 2011), who seek to grow the resources, financial and otherwise, that have been entrusted to them. Servant Leadership is for leaders who want to use their position of influence to help others and be of service for the greater good (Greenleaf, 1977).

However, they do not ignore performance expectations even though they focus on the personal development of their followers. Unlike performance-oriented leadership approaches that often "sacrifice people on the altar of profit and growth" (Sendjaya, 2015), servant leaders focus on sustainable performance over the long run. The leadership also acknowledges the importance of being authentic and true in one's interaction with others (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

Empowerment in the context of FBOs interventions refers to the process of achieving religious, social and capital strength, interaction, or capability of persons and entities. It requires the empowered initiating confidence in their own capacities to meet or respond to their personal needs and expectations. Empowerment of economic drive is conceived as the process of achieving fundamental economic privileges for the marginalized people either directly by those people, or indirectly through the help of the privileged who have access to such opportunities. It also includes actively thwarting attempts to deny those opportunities (Blanchard, John, & Alan, 1996; Wilkinson, 1998).

Empowerment in the view of Luttrell, Quiroz, Soruthon and Bird (2009) seeks to ensure that people have requisite skills, capabilities, resources such as social capital and access to secure sustainable incomes for socio-economic well-being. Based on these dimensions, some FBOs focus mainly on the significance of rights to assets and endowments which are two critical or core elements in any social and economic empowerment discourse. Empowerment then implies letting out the power inherent in people (Blanchard et al., 1996; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). It enables people to obtain the competencies that enable them overcome obstacles in life or workplaces and ultimately, enhance their capacities for positive economic engagement. Hence, the study examined the effect of servant leadership on organization performance of faith based self help groups in Kirinyaga County. Specifically, the study:

- i. Investigated the effect of empowerment on organization performance of faith-based self-help groups in Kirinyaga County.
- ii. Examined the effect of stewardship on organization performance of faith based self help groups in Kirinyaga County.
- iii. Established the effect of role modelling on organization performance of faith based self help groups in Kirinyaga County.
- iv. Investigated the effect of compelling vision on organization performance of faith based self help groups in Kirinyaga County.

## Literature Review

### Green Leaf Leadership Theory

Servant leadership theory was proposed by Greenleaf in 1970s. The theory alludes that the primary role of leaders is motivation and provision of services to people. The philosophical foundation of the theory is though provoking since it challenged traditional standing of existing leadership theories (Smith, 2005). Incorporation of the term servant in leadership may have erupted some thought provocation. Though, it provided a ground for rethinking strategies and leadership perspectives as often portrayed in heterogenous organization perspectives. Servant leadership deemed prioritization of service provision by establishing holistic approach on work and promotion of sense, power sharing during the process of decision making. The theory is appropriate for the study since there is need for deployment of faith-based leadership in church organizations. Since church is anchored on teachings of servant as portrayed by Jesus while washing feet of his disciples.

## Empirical Literature Review

Dabo and Ndan (2018) studied the effect of employee empowerment on organization performance in Nigeria quoted bottling companies. The study applied descriptive research design and sourced primary data through administration of questionnaires. Univariate and multivariate statistics analyzed the data. Results of the study indicated that employee's empowerment has significant positive contribution on organization performance of Nigeria quoted bottling companies. Since bottling companies are profit making entities, the results may not be generalized in faith-based organization that has social economic objectives.

Tahir et al., (2018) studied the effect of employee's empowerment on hotel industry organization performance. Descriptive research design was applied and primary data sourced by administering questionnaires. Regression analysis indicated that there was a positive and significant effect of employee's empowerment and organization performance. Since the study applied regression approach there was need for examination of compliance with its respective diagnostic tests prior to modeling.

Lisbijanto and Budiyanto (2014) studied the influence of servant leadership on organization performance among employees of cooperative societies in Surbaraya. The study applied cross sectional research design. Structural equation modeling indicated that servant leadership has positive and significant effect on job satisfaction though it did not affect organization performance. Since SEM is based on several diagnostic tests there was need for the study to report on conformity with requisite tests so as to minimize odds of drawing biased conclusions.

Daswati, Buntuang, Hattab and Yoberth (2021) examined the effect of servant leadership on performance of regional hospital in Pakistan. Quantitative research design was applied and primary data sourced through administration of questionnaires. Results of the study indicated that servant leadership aided in understanding organization needs. Further, there was a positive and significant effect of servant leadership on performance of general hospitals. The study may have considered reporting on regression modeling diagnostic tests since this may optimized the chances of drawing non-biased conclusions.

Vito, Mekuri-Ndimele and Wahua (2019) studied the effect of servant leadership on organization success of deposit money banks in Nigeria. Cross sectional research design was applied and primary data sourced through administration of questionnaires. Regression analysis indicated that there was a significant effect of servant leadership on organization successes. It was recommended that measures ought to be developed so as to empower and motivate employees of respective organizations. Since money taking banks are aimed at increasing profitability the results may not be generalized in a religious organization.

Karanja, Were and Muturi (2021) studied the effect of servant leadership on public participation in county governments of Kenya. The study applied descriptive and explanatory research designs. Primary data was sourced among registered voters in different counties. It was documented that there was a positive and significant effect of servant leadership and public participation. The study findings may not be generalized.

## Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a diagrammatic representation of the nexus between variables under examination. In this study servant leadership operationalized as empowerment, stewardship, role modeling and compelling vision have effect on organization performance. The relationship is as shown in Figure 1:



Figure 1: conceptual framework

### Research Methodology

The study applied descriptive research design and gathered primary data among those serving in different faith-based self-help groups in Kirinyaga County. Data sourced was analyzed through use of descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics had mean and standard deviation while inferential statistics were correlation for examination of the strength of the effect of servant leadership on organization performance. Further, multiple regression model examined the nature of the effect of empowerment, stewardship, role modeling, compelling vision and organization performance in faith-based self-help groups. The model for the study was of the form:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon$$

Where Y = Organization Performance, X<sub>1</sub>= Empowerment X<sub>2</sub>= Stewardship X<sub>3</sub>= Role modelling X<sub>4</sub>= Compelling vision.

### Findings and Discussion

The first objective examined the effect of empowerment on organization performance. Descriptive statistics using mean, standard deviation and coefficient variation. Results of the study indicates that majority agreed that their leaders emphasize on the importance of giving back to the community (mean = 4.2) and they can tell whenever something is not meeting expectations. Majority (mean =4.3) agreed that they give others responsibility to make important decisions of their job. Further, there was an agreement that leaders care more about others success rather than themselves (mean = 4.0).

**Table 1 Empowerment**

	Mean	Std. Dev	CV
Others would seek help from him/her if they had a personal problem	3.3	1.4	2.4
He/She emphasizes the importance of giving back to the community.	4.2	0.8	5.5
He/She can tell if something work related is going wrong.	4.2	0.8	5.0
He/She gives others the responsibility to make important decisions about their own jobs.	4.3	1.0	4.3
He/She makes others' career development a priority.	4.2	1.1	3.9
He/She cares more about others' success than his/her own.	4.0	1.1	3.7
He/She holds high ethical standards.	4.1	1.2	3.5

The second objective examined the effect of stewardship on organization performance. Results in Table 2 reveals that majority agreed that leaders encourage others to handle important work decisions on their own, there are interested in making sure others reach their career goals, always allow others interest to proceed and always honest (mean = 4.0).

**Table 2 Stewardship**

	Mean	Std. dev	cv
He/She cares about others' personal well-being.	3.2	1.2	2.6
He/She is always interested in helping people in the community.	3.3	1.1	3.1
He/She is able to think through complex problems.	3.5	1.3	2.8
He/She encourages others to handle important work decisions on their own.	4.0	1.0	4.0
He/She is interested in making sure others reach their career goals.	4.0	0.9	4.2
He/She puts others' best interests above his/her own.	4.0	0.9	4.4
He/She is always honest.	4.0	1.0	4.1

The third objective examined the effect of role modelling on organization performance. Results in Table 3 indicates that majority agreed that their leaders take time to talk to others on a personal level or they have thorough understanding of the organization and its goals (mean = 4.0). There was an agreement that leaders sacrifice their own interest to respond to other needs and they do not compromise ethical principles in-order to meet success (mean =4.3). Moreover, there was an agreement that leaders in faith-based organizations provided others with work experiences that enabled them to develop new skills (mean = 3.9).

**Table 3 Role Modelling**

	Mean	Std. Dev	CV
He/She takes time to talk to others on a personal level.	4.0	0.9	4.2
He/She is involved in community activities.	3.8	1.1	3.4
He/She has a thorough understanding of the organization and its goals.	4.0	1.1	3.7
He/She gives others the freedom to handle difficult situations in the way they feel is best	3.4	1.2	2.9
He/She provides others with work experiences that enable them to develop new skills	3.9	0.9	4.3
He/She sacrifices his/her own interests to meet others' needs.	4.3	0.8	5.1
He/She would not compromise ethical principles in order to meet success.	4.3	1.0	4.2

The fourth objective of the study evaluated the effect of compelling vision on organization performance. Table 4 indicates that majority agreed that their leaders recognizes whenever they are down without asking them or they can solve work problems with new or creative ideas (mean = 3.8). There was an agreement that they encourage others to volunteer in the community (mean = 4.0). Further, there was an agreement that most leaders valued honesty more than profits (mean = 3.6).

**Table 4 Compelling Vision**

	Mean	Std. Dev	CV
He/She can recognize when others are feeling down without asking them.	3.8	1.1	3.4
He/She encourages others to volunteer in the community.	4.0	1.1	3.6
He/She can solve work problems with new or creative ideas.	3.8	1.2	3.2
If others need to make important decisions at work, they do not need	3.2	1.2	2.7
He/She wants to know about others' career goals.	3.4	1.0	3.5
He/She does what he/she can to make others' jobs easier.	3.2	1.3	2.5
He/She values honesty more than profits.	3.6	1.0	3.5

Regarding organization performance majority agreed that due to servant leadership their organization employees are motivated (mean = 3.7), employees satisfaction levels are reflected on the quality services provided to customers or their product ranges enable them to protect their market share (mean =3.8). There was an

agreement that strategic leadership have either enhanced positive growth of customer base or their product development is in response to customer needs (mean = 3.5).

**Table 5 Organization Performance**

	Mean	Std. Dev	CV
Our employee motivations depend on leadership	3.7	1.3	2.8
Our employee satisfaction levels are reflected on quality of service provided to customers	3.8	1.3	3.1
Our customer base is on positive growth	3.5	1.2	2.8
Our product development team introduces products in response to customer needs	3.5	1.4	2.5
Our product ranges enable us to protect our market share	3.8	1.3	2.9

Product moment correlation analysis was carried out to examine the strength of the effect of servant leadership on organization performance. Results in Table 6 indicates that there was a positive and significant effect of empowerment on organization performance ( $\rho = 0.76$ ,  $p$  value  $< 0.05$ ). Secondly, there was a positive and significant effect of stewardship on organization performance ( $\rho = 0.864$ ,  $p$  value  $< 0.05$ ). Thirdly, role modelling has positive and significant effect on organization performance ( $\rho = 0.77$ ,  $p$  value  $< 0.05$ ). There was a positive and significant effect of compelling vision on organization performance ( $\rho = 0.846$ ,  $p$  value  $< 0.05$ ).

**Table 6 Correlation Analysis**

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
(1) Organization performance	1				
(2) Empowerment	0.76	1			
	0.00				
(3) Stewardship	0.864	0.199	1		
	0.00	0.00			
(4) Role modelling	0.77	0.232	0.147	1	
	0.00	0.00	0.00		
(5) Compelling vision	0.846	0.094	0.241	0.286	1
	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	

Regression analysis was adopted in examination of the nature of servant leadership on organization performance of faith based self help groups in Kirinyaga County. An  $r$  squared of 0.79, indicates that 79% of changes in organization performance can be accounted for by empowerment, stewardship, role modelling and compelling vision while the remaining percentage is attributes to other aspects not included in the model. An  $F$  statistic of 108.15 with  $p$  value  $< 0.05$ , indicates that the effect of servant leadership on organization performance can be examined through regression analysis.

The first objective of the study examined the effect of empowerment on organization performance of faith-based organizations in Kirinyaga County. Results of the study indicates there was a positive and significant effect of empowerment on organization performance ( $\beta = 0.048$ ,  $p$  value  $< 0.05$ ). This indicates that a unit increase in empowerment while holding constant stewardship, role modelling and compelling vision constant increases organization performance by 0.048 units.

The second objective of the study examined the effect of stewardship on organization performance of faith-based organizations in Kirinyaga County. Results of the study indicates there was a positive and significant effect of stewardship on organization performance ( $\beta = 0.361$ ,  $p$  value  $< 0.05$ ). This indicates that a unit increase in stewardship while holding constant empowerment, role modelling and compelling vision constant increases organization performance by 0.361 units.

The third objective of the study examined the effect of role modelling on organization performance of faith-based organizations in Kirinyaga County. Results of the study indicates there was a positive and significant effect of role modelling on organization performance ( $\beta = 0.161$ ,  $p$  value  $< 0.05$ ). This indicates that a unit increase in role modeling while holding constant stewardship, empowerment and compelling vision constant increases organization performance by 0.161 units.

The fourth objective of the study examined the effect of compelling vision on organization performance of faith-based organizations in Kirinyaga County. Results of the study indicates there was a positive and significant effect of compelling vision on organization performance ( $\beta = 0.048$ ,  $p$  value  $< 0.05$ ). This indicates that a unit increase in compelling vision while holding constant stewardship, role modelling and empowerment constant increases organization performance by 0.048 units.

The findings are in support of Dabo and Ndan (2018) who reported that employee empowerment has positive and significant effect on performance of bottling companies in Nigeria. Similarly, the study mirrored Tahir et al., (2018) documented positive and significant effect of empowerment and performance in hotel industry. Further, Lisbijanto and Budiyo (2014) documented positive and significant effect of servant leadership and job satisfaction. In addition, Daswati et al., (2021) positive and significant effect servant and performance of general hospital.

**Table 7 Regression Analysis**

Organization performance	Coef	St. Error	t-value	p-value	[95% Conf Interval]		Sig
Empowerment	0.048	0.018	2.66	0.010	-0.097	0.193	***
Stewardship	0.361	0.082	4.41	0.00	0.199	0.523	***
Role modeling	0.161	0.068	2.37	0.019	0.027	0.295	**
Compelling vision	0.328	0.087	3.78	0.00	0.156	0.5	***
Constant	0.061	0.043	1.42	0.158	-0.024	0.146	
Mean dependent var	0.083			SD dependent var	0.997		
R-squared	0.79			Number of obs	120		
F-test	108.15			Prob > F	0.00		
Akaike crit. (AIC)	161.43			Bayesian crit. (BIC)	175.36		

\*\*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*  $p < .05$ , \*  $p < .1$

### Conclusion and Recommendations

From the findings it can be concluded that faith-based self-help groups in Kirinyaga County have embraced servant leadership. Notable attributes of servant leadership were employee's empowerment, stewardship, role modelling and compelling vision. Since there was positive and significant effect of empowerment, role modelling, stewardship and compelling vision on organization performance. It can be concluded that servant leadership have significant contribution on organization performance in faith-based self-help groups.

Since the results indicates significant effect of servant leadership there is need for faith-based self help groups organizations in Kirinyaga County to develop measures aimed at enhancing conformity of servant leadership mantra among employees. This would be achievable if there will be clear strategies for empowerment, stewardship, role modelling and compelling vision.

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