The effect of servant leadership tenets and perceived impact in a community development context

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ABSTRACT

The study responded to calls to extend the current understanding of servant leadership into new contexts. The selected context for investigation was the nonprofit sector in Kenya. Three objectives guided the study that sought to establish the servant leadership dimensions adopted, the impact achieved in the target communities and the effect of the dimensions on the level of impact achieved. 365 senior managers were sampled from 73 nonprofit organizations and data was collected on both dimensions of servant leadership and perceived impact in the communities served by the organizations. The study reports that ten attributes of servant leadership are relevant to the sector and are practiced to a moderate extent and this extent of adoption has accomplished a moderate level of impact in the communities served. Four tenets of servant leadership, holistic approach to work, service to others, sense of community and uprightness have a significant effect on the level of impact achieved in the communities. While a holistic approach and service to others have a negative effect, a sense of community and uprightness have a positive effect. The findings raise implications for the servant leadership theory and point to the need to complement its dimensions with the postulates of the situational leadership theory for a more appropriate application in work situations. The findings contribute toward addressing conceptual, theoretical, and empirical gaps found in the extant literature on servant leadership.

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Introduction

Servant leadership is a governance and direction style recognized in organizations and administration that possesses outstanding capabilities of personal characteristics that strive to influence for the better, by involving everyone through various interactions. Leadership is not magic, but a methodical way of operating in a manner that triggers influence for the best outcome (Mohammed et al., 2018). Even though influence has a great role in leadership, however purely on its own, it will not suffice as there are other important characteristics that need to be put in place and practiced in order to have the richness of servant leadership exploited for the benefit of all the stakeholders (Surji, 2015).

While other leadership styles still remain applicable, the attributes of the servant leadership style as proposed by Greenleaf and summarized by Focht and Ponton (2015), present various traits of the servant leader that stand out in offering essential pillars of leadership that adequately respond to the call for a suitable and corresponding leadership style for driving the nonprofit organizations into accomplishing their nonprofit societal based outcomes. The summary presents the servant leader as an individual of great personality, one who puts others first, has ideal skills on communication, is kind-hearted, has forethoughts and far-sightedness, serves and leads with ethical power, and serves a higher purpose for which he/she is driven by passion. Parris and Peachey (2013); Zhong Wayne and Liden, (2015); Eva et al. (2019); Canavesi and Minelli (2021), in an analysis of the extant conceptual, empirical and theoretical literatures on servant leadership, observed that even though a lot of ground has been covered with regard to servant
leadership as a distinct area contributing to the success of organizations, there still remains unexplored features of servant leadership which presents a call for extension of scholarship on servant leadership that gives attention to its application in new contexts.

Among the cited contexts where scholarship is required is the sector dealing with community development as undertaken by the nonprofit organizations. The nonprofit organizations serve as development agencies in partnership with governments, donors and religious organizations in addressing needs of community members by initiating relevant interventions that target constraints to development through such areas as literacy, health, human empowerment and other forms of humanitarian assistance. The setting is such that the prevailing conditions in the catchment areas would require personnel involved in the community development work to be driven by passion that is typical of the characteristics of the servant leadership style. However, given the state of the extant literature on servant leadership, it is not yet clear how the servant leadership dimensions have been embraced by managers in this sector, and in addition how much of it stands to explain the level of impact attained at the community level through the interventions initiated by the nonprofit organizations. This study therefore builds on extant literature that has achieved considerable milestones in servant leadership to extend the scholarship into the nonprofit organizations sector with a view to finding out how servant leadership dimensions have been embraced in the sector and how they explain the impact that the organizations have achieved in their catchment areas. The study sought to achieve three objectives: to identify servant leadership dimensions applied by leaders in the nonprofit sector, establish the level of community development impact achieved in catchment areas by the nonprofit organizations and the effect of the identified dimensions on the community development impact achieved by the nonprofit organizations to their catchment areas.

The study is deemed necessary as it responds to calls raised by scholars who have shown interest in studying servant leadership (Chishimba, 2018; Hoch et al., 2018; Eva et al., 2019). The calls raised on the need to extend the scope of contexts studied so far has implications for both theoretical and conceptual scopes of consideration. At the empirical front, the study has investigated the application of the tenets of servant leadership into the less studied nonprofit sector which the authors consider to be more suited for the application of servant leadership due to the nature of the work undertaken in communities which takes the form of humanitarian service thus calling for a more humane leadership style. The findings of this study offer insights into the dimensions of servant leadership that are more appropriate as well as the manner in which they contribute towards community development. In terms of conceptual scope, while extant literature has covered a lot of ground in providing an understanding of the nature of servant leadership, the literature lacks an integrated set of the dimensions of servant leadership (Eva et al., 2019). The study relied on extant theoretical, conceptual and empirical literature to consolidate a list of 36 components of servant leadership out of which factor analysis extracted ten and highlighted the specific factors that comprise each component in terms of the level of loading. Through this, the research advances the knowledge on servant leadership to a new frontier by providing an integrated set of servant leadership dimensions and explains the manner in which they apply to the less researched context of the nonprofit organizational setting. Lastly, at the theoretical front, the study provides the emerging theoretical implications for the application of the dimensions of servant leadership dimensions. While servant leadership scholarship has been advanced on the basis of its anchorage on the model of Greenleaf, the discussions of the study point to the need to integrate its application with the postulates of the situational leadership theory. Therefore, the study provides an understanding on the possible areas of complimentarity between the servant leadership theory and other existing theories on leadership.

**Literature Review**

**Conceptual and Theoretical Review**

**Servant Leadership**

Greenleaf, the founder of servant leadership, asserted that servant leaders put the interest and aspirations of other people first and theirs after (Stone & Deno, 2017). This does not necessarily mean that the servant leaders will totally forget themselves. There is always need for the servant leaders to create a balance between serving others and self. There is a tendency of servant leaders leaning more on caring for the employees and serving the organization and community at the expense of themselves which affects the outcome of the leadership style (Canavesi & Minelli, 2021). Accordingly, service to others is the core choice of a servant leader, and their principal purpose is to render service to others first, and not leading but transforming their personnel to “grow healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to become servants” (p. 13-14). Such a leader is driven by humility as their central focus without which, there will be no servant leadership.

Community development cannot be realized without proper implementation of programs, projects and strategies. There is need to have an ideal leadership style in place that will push this agenda and have the implementation take place in order for an organization to perform optimally in serving the society. The complexity of community development requires not only a single actor, but a collective of actions by many actors (Retno et al., 2020). This means that the leadership in place needs to have the capacity to engage various bodies from the organization and the community for effective implementation to happen (Meerkerk & Edelenbos, 2018). Thus, there is need for the servant leaders to have certain attributes that enhance their performance and management of the complexities that come with community development. According to Roupnel et al., (2019), servant leaders are the ideal kind of leaders to bring change, and more often than not, change can only be wrought if projects, programs and strategies that generate the kind of change and outcomes expected are well implemented to achieve community development. In most decision-making processes,
there is need for a leader to have foresight which closely connects to the intuition, which is the ‘unknowable’ characteristic that servant leaders should possess and practice while working hand in hand with the followers.

Bilal et al. (2021) in their study found out that servant leadership has a positive and significant influence on project effectiveness through team goal and process clarity. This means that, there is need for involvement of other parties in the execution of projects and programs that aid community development. The leadership qualities inherent within the servant leaders realize the flow of the servant leadership tenets from the point of self-sacrificing and unselfishness, grounded on the others first orientation within the leader’s heart which projects their values, principles and ethics. These tenets have been found to lie at the core of the servant leadership theory and are vital to the long standing wellbeing of the respective entity that is served (Fields, Thompson & Hawkins, 2015; Benson & Peprah, 2021). The unique traits that distinguish a servant leader could be construed to be elements of their personality. Thus, the personality of the leader manifested in their traits is demonstrated through a passion to serve others (Langhof & Güldenberg, 2020). Such leaders realize the flow of these tenets from the unfilish “others directed” orientation that resides deep inside the leader’s heart. This orientation projects their values, principles, and ethics that have been found to lie at the focal point of the leadership style and are vital to the longstanding wellbeing of the community development (Fields et al., 2015).

In order to address the concerns of the paper, the authors reviewed literature from several scholars who have attempted to operationalize the servant leadership type of governance. Table 1 summarizes the key indicators drawn from the different scholars.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Servant Leadership Dimensions from Different Scholars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scholar</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenleaf, (1970)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patterson, (2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spears, (2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focht and Ponton, (2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takoeva, (2017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basri et al., (2017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musiyambiri, (2019)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It has been pointed that, in spite of the progress made so far in operationalizing servant leadership and identification of the variety of dimensions that display its nature, this progress has not given a conclusive set of servant leadership dimensions that can be applicable for use in the nonprofit organizations. The progress so far achieved has been affected by the limitation in the contextual scope of the application of servant leadership. Out of these servant leadership dimensions by different authors, there has not been found an agreed upon set of dimensions that will be applicable in the community development set up. Thus, out of these various dimensions of servant leadership, the authors identified an integrated set of indicators that would be more suited for application in the community development set-up. The study adopted a list of 36 servant leadership attributes that were investigated to understand how they have been embraced in the context on nonprofit organizations. The authors argue that when leaders who are engaged in the community development programs serve with passion which is highly derived from these dimensions, there will be corresponding transformation among their followers who work under the influence of the leaders at various levels which will translate into work at the community level that will bring about suitable impact. The paper in the next section discusses how this expected impact is brought about at the community level.

**Community Development Impact**

Community development is initiated in the form of interventions that target the main constraints to development. These interventions take the form of projects, strategies and programs that aim at addressing the problems/issues faced at the community level. How the process works to bring about change has been the focus of policy studies which attempts to spell out the role of leadership in championing community development. Muhammad (2014) in trying to link leadership with the role it plays at the societal level, connected leadership with project implementation. He considered project implementation as a social action designed to effect change which when considered in the context of societal development, is construed to imply and encompass improvement of people’s lives who comprise a particular community, and ultimately determines the level of development attained by the respective society. Parra (2016) similarly demonstrates that at the societal level, there is a link between leadership and project implementation. Kamaruddin and Prasojo (2017) also support this relationship at the organizational level. Thus, in view of the context considered for this study, it is suggested that an important outcome of leadership when it is in operation in a context focusing on societal development is that of societal impact arising from successful project implementation.

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Community impact can be divided into three levels; individual, community and national. The first level of community impact is at the individual level. Individuals have strategies that govern them on values and interests that guide and inform people how they act in specific circumstances, forming a fertile ground for implementing community and national projects (Riheläinen & Böhm, 2017). The second level of community impact lies at the community/society. Community project implementation is aimed at benefiting the community as a whole, and its citizens as individuals and groups. The core intention is to reinforce the ties that clutch a given society in close association and evoke it to positively grow. These projects support the society to maintain its personality, traditions, and important history while encouraging necessary changes in an appropriate way (Raggamby & Rubik, 2013). The third level is at the national level where they describe the causes of action that generate the beginning of change. The core intention of these projects is to serve the nation’s citizens fairly without discrimination (Raggamby & Rubik, 2013). The state and localities (communities) play a protuberant role in the implementation process that affect communities and individuals as citizens in broad ways. The state and local governments make key investments in implementing policies that govern key beneficiaries of the citizens and inhabitants of the country like education, infrastructure, health, sanitation among others.

Across all these levels of community impact, the concern by scholars of policy studies is the impact brought about by interventions in the society (Allison & Kaye, 2017). This concern has an implication on the operational indicators of the concept of community impact. Since most of the work expected to bring about the outcomes is executed through the projects and programs, scholars rely on the systems for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) to identify the relevant indicators for project implementation (Tippins, Sackett & Oswald, 2018). In the process of implementing community development projects and interventions, monitoring and evaluation are key components that should be critically taken into account. According to the United Nations ESCAP (2017), monitoring is important because it determines the progress of projects, programs, and subprograms according to the plan, to realize the intended outputs and outcomes in the community in this context. Thus, three components of monitoring and evaluation are important for measuring the evidence needed for community impact: project execution, project outputs and project outcomes.

Project execution is a phase where the translation of what is on paper is actualized. This phase encompasses carrying out all the project details in order to realize the end result of the projects and programs. This is the most compound and longest stage of any project life. In order to remain on track, there is need for constant communication between the leaders and the workers (Burns et al., 2019). The project outline and all associated procedures should be put into consideration and carefully followed. After the investment of time and resources in the planning phase, there is need to be careful in executing the project to ensure delivery of the intended outcomes. In the implementation process, the leaders need to be alert for signals of critical changes that may be necessary (Bii et al., 2019). This is necessary to avoid inflexibly between following the laid down plan to the letter following the laid down plan to the letter and critical indicators calling for some adjustment and change which may jeopardize the entire project.

Project outputs are the domino effect attained instantaneously after implementation of any activity (Wallace, 2019). Some of the outputs expected in projects, programs and strategies involve the participation of the communities. The project outputs vary from one program to another, one community to another, and even from the relationship the implementing team will develop with the community during the whole process. It is evident that outputs are potentially important because they set the basis of setting up the program activities and empowering the community members, while at the same time addressing the core issues found out by the inquiry. These investigations are not only important during the analytical course where the agencies are trying to comprehend the community’s resident circumstances and conditions, but they will keep addressing issues in all stages of the project implementation (Lamhauge et al., 2013).

Project outcomes are very important for a monitoring and evaluation system because they provide information in good time on whether the project is on course or whether the intended changes have started to happen. It can therefore be summed up that, outputs enable the agency to know if the programs and projects are in the right track so as to deliver the intended outcomes. The agencies who deliver community projects clearly know the intended outcomes. Depending on the community, the projects, programs, and strategies will be either; dealing with poverty, delivering of childcare, building community members’ confidence, or pursuing some other valuable and meaningful cause. In order to check the progress of the programs, it is ideal to periodically take an analysis of what has been done, and whether what has been done is bringing a change to the lives of people and the community at large. It is also prudent to check if the problems that were being addressed are changing for the better (Taylor et al., 2005). When changes are seen, it is clear evidence of the outcomes of the project. When a project is implemented and there seems to be no change happening in individual people and the community, it is evident that there is no outcome.

This study pins its interest on the second level which is the community. This is because the projects and programs implemented will make communities healthier and will benefit from its quality of life. The community project implementation initiatives are meant to make the community a better place to inhabit and over time improve the situations and lives of the inhabitants. Hence, governments and institutions will not only see a community as a place where people live, but as a shared experience in which, every member has rights to contribute and equally benefit from the policies. This means that the national policies will be implemented with inclusivity of community members at different levels, meaning that they will support the whole process. The community at large are the beneficiaries of these policies hence the change at the community level (the changed standard of living among others) will be a clear indicator of the implemented policies (Aigbavboa & Thwala, 2013).
Research and Methodology

The Study Context

The study was done among nonprofit organizations operated by religious organizations in Kenya. The nonprofit type of organizations are those that are set up by the founders for promoting the welfare of the society or for promotion of art and culture in society (Donoghue et al., 1999). The type of organizations in Kenya falls into the following categories; charitable organizations, social advocacy groups, foundations, civil leagues, social welfare organizations and local employee association. They further take different forms of operations including: rehabilitation centers, day care centers for children and vulnerable adults, training services (adult learning centers), health care centers, civil rights, education, health and human services, and arts and culture and are aimed at strengthening communities, promoting the civil society, advocacy, entrepreneurship training, empowerment, microfinancing and meeting human service needs. They represent a more homogenous group of organizations in the community development programs.

Research Population and Sampling

The target population for this study was 291 religious nonprofit organizations operating in Kenya with their head offices based in the capital city Nairobi. The unit of observation in each organization was the departmental level at which the authors considered servant leadership would be in application as managers interact with followers and communities. The nonprofit organizations were distributed according to the different religious faiths in Kenya as the basis for forming the strata through which respondents were identified. The strata were developed from the system of classification of the various religions in the world. According to Wessendorf, Jepsen and Jacquelin (2017) the major religions of the world are Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Sikhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Shinto, Zoroastrianism, Baha’i, and Jainism. Out of these, those that are applicable in the context of the study were Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism (Wessendorf et al., 2017).

The unit of observation was the key departmental leaders providing leadership in the areas of administration, human resource management, finance, project planning, project execution, procurement, public relations, and monitoring and evaluation. Using this approach, the total population of the units of observation who formed the pool of respondents and how they were selected is summarized in Table 2. The study used a multiple stage sampling method which involves the use of two or more frames because of the two main stages (unit of analysis and observation) with their subsets that were undertaken in order to get the ultimate sample size. The first stage was that of determining the sample size for unit of analysis and that of observation using the formula by Daniel (1991) with the confidence level of 0.05 and statistical significance of P < 0.05 which gave respective samples of 73 and 365 for the organizations and respondents. Proportionate stratified method was used whereby different strata in the population were identified and in which the number of elements drawn from each stratum were proportionate to the relative number of elements in each stratum (Ragab & Arisha, 2017). The strata were used to distribute the respondents according to the relative weight of each stratum to the total number of respondents as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Strata</th>
<th>No. of Organizations</th>
<th>Proportionate Sample of the Unit of Analysis</th>
<th>Total No. of Potential Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evangelical</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>1,648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seventh-day Adventist</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jehovah Witness</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub Total</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>2,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>291</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>3,328</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The respondents in religious nonprofit organizations were identified through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is an acceptable kind of sampling for special situations, and it uses the judgement of an expert in selecting cases with a specific purpose in mind. This helped to produce a sample that was logically assumed to be representative of the population (Graff, 2017). These respondents were selected from the unit of observation from each of the following departments; administration, human resource management, finance, project planning and execution, and monitoring and evaluation. The key leaders of these departments were the main respondents to the 5-Point Likert Scale questionnaire.

Research Design and Data

The study used descriptive explanatory survey design. This research design offers a more detailed channel that uncovers the underlying structure of a relatively large set of variables (Ragab & Arisha, 2017). The study obtained data from more than one
organization, so a survey was suitable for this study. The study sought demographic data since the characteristics of the respondents were useful in explaining some of the phenomenon the study investigated. The characteristics of interest were: gender, age, education level, years worked within the sector, years worked in the current position and programs offered to the community. The research obtained data on the two variables of the study, servant leadership and perceived community impact. Using previous literature, the researchers constructed suitable instruments on a 5-point Likert scale and presented 36 items for the independent variable and 12 for the dependent. The questionnaire was administered through the help of research assistants who were assigned specific strata. The researchers obtained research license from the relevant government authorities after which they contacted the sampled organizations to present a request. The research assistants then distributed the questionnaires and administered in person to the respective respondents.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were done to help in analyzing data by showing and summarizing it in a meaningful manner so that patterns may develop from the analyzed data (Taherdoost, 2018). These statistics further helped the study to visualize what the data was showing, especially with a big population and allow the study to present data in a meaningful way that enabled simpler interpretations (Loeb, McFarland, Morris, Reardon & Reber, 2017). The researchers in this study used mean and standard deviation to summarize the study variables on the effect of servant leadership tenets on community impact. Due to the nature of servant leadership and the state of research which puts it at an exploratory level, the study chose the exploratory factor analysis for both variables. The exploratory factor analysis was used in this study to aid in understanding the structure of a set of variables and reduce the data set to a manageable size while retaining as much of the original information as possible. Due to the latent kind of the study’s variables, this statistical methodology was ideal to analyze the data in order to measure the study’s variables relationships that cannot be measured directly. The indicators of the study’s variables were used as facets to measure the effect caused or realized on each other through generated clusters of variables that seemed to cluster together in a meaningful way. Multiple regression analysis as applied to test the causal effects among the extracted clusters of the independent variable and those of the dependent.

Results

Respondents and Organizational Characteristics

The study targeted 365 respondents from 73 organizations and the response rate was 88%. The researchers obtained data on several demographic attributes of the respondents to help in explaining some of the phenomenon the study investigated. The characteristics of interest were: gender, age, years worked within the sector and in the current position. The demographic data showed that majority of the respondents were female (54%) while the rest were male. Their age brackets ranged from 20 to over 60 years. They were well educated with the least educated being diploma holders (4%) and the highest with a doctorate degree (3.2%) and the majority holding a bachelors and masters’ degree (88.8%). The respondents had varied experience working in the nonprofit sector with the lowest being below 9 years (54.4%) and the highest at over 30 years (4.4%). The experience gained at leadership level at below 9 years had the majority (83%) while those between 10 and 20 and over 20 years were represented by 15% and 2% respectively. The organizations they worked for at the time of the survey were involved in healthcare, provision of clean water, education, food distribution, advocacy, counseling, Entrepreneurship training and microfinance support programs.

Dimensions of Servant Leadership Applied in Nonprofit Organizations’ Leaders

Factor analysis was applied to extract the clusters of factors and their components from the list of 36 dimensions presented to the respondents. Ten factors were extracted and their components identified on the basis of factor loading score of >0.5 in line with the suggestion by Field (2013). The 10 extracted factors accounted for 62% of the total variance of the level of servant leadership applied by the leaders in the nonprofit organizations. The extracted factors and their components and the measures of central tendency are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Servant Leadership Extracted Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor Extracted</th>
<th>Extracted Indicators</th>
<th>Factor Range</th>
<th>Loading</th>
<th>Aggregate Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Reliability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.672-0.783</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>0.735</td>
<td>0.743</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holistic Approach to Work</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.807-0.828</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>0.681</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Relationships</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.807-0.898</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>0.972</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Community</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.714-0.768</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>0.645</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drive Towards Development</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.644-0.754</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>0.586</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.727-0.799</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>0.616</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability to the Community</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.714-0.714</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>0.652</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service to Others</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.765-0.770</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>0.826</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uprightness</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.802-0.802</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>0.642</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability to Stakeholders</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.698-0.698</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>0.430</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The ten extracted servant leadership dimensions had high factor loading ranges with a minimum of 0.698-0.698 and the maximum of 0.807-0.898. The mean aggregate ranged between 3.47 as the minimum and 4.79 as the maximum. These results indicate that these dimensions were highly rated hence qualifying to form the ideal set of the servant leadership dimensions that were mostly applied by managers in the sampled religious nonprofit organizations.

**Community impact Level Achieved**

Five dimensions of the community impact achieved were extracted. Table 4 presents the factors and their respective loadings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor Extracted</th>
<th>Extracted Indicators</th>
<th>Factor Range</th>
<th>Loading Mean Aggregate</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Reliability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Social-Economic Impact</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.664-0.836</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>1.035</td>
<td>0.834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projects Development and Implementation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.563-0.890</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>0.910</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Welfare Impact</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.739-0.825</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>1.030</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Based Services</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.704-0.880</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>1.341</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Based Products</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.714-0.812</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>1.241</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The level of community impact achieved in the communities served by the sampled nonprofit organizations was at a moderate extent. The impact was achieved on several areas as extracted through factor analysis community based services and products, project implementation, socioeconomic and community welfare.

**Establishing the Effect of the Applicable Dimensions**

Multiple regression analysis was used to determine the effect of the 10 dimensions of servant leadership on the level of impact accomplished in the catchment areas served by the sampled nonprofit organization as shown in table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
<th>Observation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>.740a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R^2</td>
<td>.650</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AdjR^2</td>
<td>.615</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>12.746</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>β Constant</td>
<td>-1.038</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>Not Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>β Empowerment</td>
<td>.113</td>
<td>.198</td>
<td>Not Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>β Holistic Approach to Work</td>
<td>-.531</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>β Building Relationships</td>
<td>-.025</td>
<td>.734</td>
<td>Not Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>β Sense of Community</td>
<td>.416</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>β Drive towards Development</td>
<td>.152</td>
<td>.171</td>
<td>Not Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>β Morality</td>
<td>.083</td>
<td>.260</td>
<td>Not Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>β Accountability to the Community</td>
<td>.201</td>
<td>.075</td>
<td>Not Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>β Service to Others</td>
<td>-.342</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>β Uprightness</td>
<td>.250</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>β Accountability to the Stakeholders</td>
<td>.076</td>
<td>.324</td>
<td>Not Significant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The set of ten components of servant leadership extracted explain 62% of the variation in the level of impact achieved. The remaining 38% of the unexplained variation was attributed to the factors which the in-depth interviews showed some insights into as observed from the key informants that pointed to the possible effect of hick-ups along the way, lack of funds especially when donations are stopped, personnel messing up with the project, misappropriation of funds and mismatch of the project with the community need”.

The results of the regression analysis show that out of the 10 dimensions extracted only four have a significant statistical effect on the level of impact attained. These are holistic approach to work ($\beta=0.531, P=0.000$), sense of community ($\beta=0.416, P=0.002$), service to others ($\beta=0.342, P=0.000$) and uprightness ($\beta=0.250, P=0.005$).

**Discussions**

The study had three objectives. The findings of the study are discussed in line with each of the three objectives. The first objective aimed at establishing the dimensions of servant leadership that the managers in the nonprofit organizations have applied in the respective communities where their programs have been implemented. These dimensions include; empowerment, holistic approach to work, building relations, sense of community, drive towards development, morality, accountability to the community, accountability to stakeholders, service to others, and uprightness. These ten dimensions of servant leadership were shown to contribute to a moderate level of impact in the communities served by the sampled organizations. This finding sends a clear indication that servant leadership is relevant to the work of the nonprofit organizations and helps in addressing calls made by previous...
The effect of the four factors was clustered into two scenarios in terms of the type of effect they have on the dependent variable, namely negative or positive effect. Two of the factors have a negative effect while the other two have a positive effect. Those with a negative effect are holistic approach to work and service to others. By considering the nature of these attributes of servant leadership, it is possible to draw vital lessons for practicing managers as well as the organizations on the application of servant leadership. Previous research has revealed that holistic approach to work is demonstrated the moment servant leaders utilize this aspect as a driving force in their leadership style to target the attitudes of followers to develop favorable attitudes towards work, the organization, and the society served, so as to improve the quality of relationships existing among organizations, people and communities (Retno et al., 2020). As servant leaders take a holistic approach to work, they work towards integrating the notions of empowerment, team building, service orientation, participatory management, and total quality to ensure that the intended outcomes are achieved, and the organization’s performance is growing commensurate to that of the employees. Having proved their commitment and reliability, leaders will receive support from their staff, enabling them to achieve expectations because employees are able to raise their performance to a higher level (Ying et al., 2020). On the other hand, Qin et al. (2021) postulated that service to others is purely based on the fundamental desire to first be of help to others as opposed to self through coaching, empowering, training, delegation and sharing of power among others. These components trigger some sort of assurance of acceptance and appreciation to both leaders and followers. Therefore, the primary purpose and motivation of a servant leader is to inspire greatness in their followers and employees, while having the organizational success as an indirect benefit derived from servant leadership outcomes.

The findings of this study prove that service to others is a vital component of servant leadership especially in projects and programs implementation. This attribute of servant leadership is achieved through employee empowerment by the leaders in order to fully deliver the projects and programs as intended in order to achieve community development. This agrees with the findings of Stirling et al. (2019) who observed that involvement of every employee in the organization’s matters is very vital. This includes seeking views of the subordinates and incorporating them in decision making. It has been pointed that the behavior of the leader agreeing to the views of a subordinate is the indicator of their sense of great humility. The descriptive statistics on this attribute showed that service to others is moderately practiced by leaders of the sampled religious nonprofit organizations in Nairobi County. Vinding and Mikkelsen (2016) also observed that when the workforce know that their input is valued and it matters in contributing to the business goals, there are higher chances of having them engaged, which leads to more innovative ideas that make the implementation process swift and achievable. Tawane (2019), also found out that incorporation of every participant in running organizations yields a lot especially when it comes to project execution. The involvement act enables everyone to submit to each other knowing that there is dependence on each other for success to be achieved.

The emerging concern that the study raised was that, with some level of adoption of these two servant leadership components, why do they realize a negative effect among the sampled organizations? The study suggests two possible scenarios to explain this outcome based on the study respondents and the nature of the dependent variable. With regard to the respondents, the research focused on leaders as the main respondents of the questionnaire hence, what is reported, is from the leaders’ point of view which leads to the second point of explanation. Secondly, servant leadership by its nature requires the participation of the whole organization’s system, which implies that, there is a greater need to have everybody, both the leaders and followers actively being involved. If the leaders fail to involve the followers, the intended outcome will not be achieved. Therefore, it can be inferred that the leaders’ wishes may not have been translated into the right kind of influence on the part of followers who are do the work of the implementation of projects that impact communities. If the leaders’ desires are not influencing the followers, it implies that there is a possibility of the leadership not being effective in influencing the follower behavior in the manner of translating the leaders' visions and aspirations into the relevant community outputs through the interventions applied.

The two components with a significant positive effect are sense of community and uprightness. This finding corroborates with previous studies which claimed that Servant leaders promote the sense of community in all aspects of operations (Ambali et al., 2016; Ahmed & Amiri, 2019) by developing positive relationships that contribute to having tasks completed in an easy and lighter manner. This sense of community turns out to be an excellent long-term strategy of attaining organizational performance (Mathias, 2018). Further, the key elements that build this construct of promoting a sense of community include; sharing emotional connections, integration, membership, assimilation, influence, and fulfillment of needs (Kidsmatter, 2019). The way of operation of the sector where the study was done requires the involvement of every person especially the people on the ground. The stewardship role (sense of community) towards the followers is very crucial in the entire process of programs and projects implementation (Eva et al., 2019). It has theoretically been considered part of the leader's personality in which the self-concept of a leader allows them to view themselves as stewards, thus making them to be critically accountable in all ways of their operations (Russell, 2014). Decision making processes are treated with great openness, good understanding, mutually acceptable practices, and the followers’ maturity in order to realize the expected outcomes (Ragnarsson, Kristjánsdóttir & Gunnarsdóttir, 2018). Even though stewardship is one of the servant
leadership components that many researchers agree to, yet it is not highly practiced to impact communities in religious nonprofit organizations (Uzohue, Yaya & Akintayo, 2016; Ghasabeh & Provitera, 2017; Alasmari, 2018; Eva et al., 2019). The extracted components and their descriptive scores indicated that the manner in which the dimension of stewardship was practiced formed a pattern that could be clustered into two forms, that tending towards the followers and that geared towards governance requirements by external stakeholders. The statistics indicated that the components of stewardship geared towards external stakeholders scored higher mean scores than that tending towards followers. Therefore, the study can infer that the part of the sense of community has been practiced in the context of investigation more or less as a governance requirement and not as a free will action by the sampled managers.

Uprightness on the other hand was practiced to a high extent as the descriptive characteristics of the component of the attribute had an indication that the leaders practice it to a high extent. The findings from Thao and Kang (2020) show that the organizational behavior which supports uprightness towards work and other areas of operation, is greatly influenced by the servant leaders. Any leader who does not embrace and exercise uprightness, will disseminate the same tendencies to their followers leading to nonperformance. Hence, a leader who does not embrace authenticity and uprightness in all their operations fails to meet the required qualities of a servant leader. This is because the employees’ behavior is greatly promoted, motivated and encouraged by the leader in place through influence (Chi et al., 2020). Thus, the fact that uprightness has a positive effect demonstrates that the sampled leaders have embraced and practiced the relevant elements of servant leadership that enhance the qualities of uprightness.

The study had noted that the previous attempts on servant leadership had been done in other contexts outside the developing world and the nonprofit organizations sector to the extent that hitherto little knowledge has been documented on how servant leadership would operate in nonprofit sector of a developing country. The current study was done in Kenya and sampled 73 religious nonprofit organizations and studied 4 dimensions of servant leadership with regard to how they have been practiced as well as on how they affect the implementation of projects. The findings provide understanding on the dimensions of servant leadership that are relevant for community development in a developing country context. Through this findings, the study extends the work of (Greenleaf, 1970; Chishimba, 2018; Hoch et al., 2018; Eva et al., 2019) and offers plausible explanations on the dimensions of servant leadership applicable to the nonprofit organizations in a developing country context. Further, most of the previous researches had been undertaken using quantitative research designs and very few using qualitative and mixed methods (Eva et al., 2019).

Implications

The findings reported raise implications on the theoretical underpinning of servant leadership in its application in practice. The components of servant leadership that were investigated trace to the servant leadership model proposed by Greenleaf. From this model, the two words that comprise the name of the model are leader and servant which are an “oxymoron” because of the different roles they play simultaneously. These dynamic theoretical relationships and the complementary roles between leadership and servanthood has largely attracted many leadership scholars and practices (Eva et al., 2019). The philosophical basis of servant leadership theory is grounded on the motivation of serving first. This brings in the component of incorporating followers in the leadership processes at diverse levels in order to achieve the intended outcome which breaks the paradigm that has existed of leaders who take up the roles of managing something, directing those who are led, and activating power to inviting all in the operation of the organization. The servant leader is prompted by conscience to serve and is driven by conformity with some normative prospects. The serving attribute from the leader gradually is adopted by all the followers hence, empowering them to be service followers. The self-concept of a leader that allows them to view themselves as stewards makes them critically accountable in all ways to all stakeholders (Russell, 2014). The application of this leadership however needs to show relevance to the context of application. The leaders who embrace dimensions of servant leadership will need to understand their contexts and align its application with the characteristics of that context. Thus, while embracing servant leadership attributes, leaders would be effective if they adopted its postulates along those of the situational leadership theory which advocates that the leader should flex the leadership style to fit the task and the individual’s needs (Ng and Kakanda, 2018). To effectively use servant leadership style, there is need for the leader to know and understand every employee’s competency and keep developing the employees through all the task levels to allow them to increase their responsibility and complexity (Mohamed, 2017).

These discussions raise a number of implications for practice. First, the study raises an implication revolving around the negative contribution arising from two components of servant leadership namely; holistic approach to work and service to others. From the findings and interpretations given, the study observes that in order for servant leadership to deliver its full potential, it needs to be integrated into the core of business strategy (Munjal, 2017) through the organization’s core values and shared dreams pervading the organization that need to be spelt out in the mission of an organization. Secondly, the study raises an implication revolving around the leaders’ perception on leadership practices. Despite the confession that the sampled respondents practiced aspects of servant leadership, from the interpretation of the findings, it was observed that, it was not demonstrated beyond the confession that they had inculcated the essence of the core of servant leadership in themselves. Thus, the confessed practices may have been borne out of compliance to duty and making it difficult to lead by example. This may imply that servant leadership attributes need to be innate, intrinsically borne and nurtured if they are to manifest through the leadership process of influence.
The third implication points to the manner in which servant leadership brings about influence among followers. The interpretations of the findings underscored the role of the virtue of humility being at the core of the process of influence emanating from servant leadership practice. Thus, in order for servant leadership to have impact among followers, humility needs to form a key component for the leaders’ personality as the drive for servant leadership practices. The last implication arising from this process of influence is the need to exert influence among followers through the aspect of culture. The study points that culture needs to be engaged at two levels; at individual leadership and corporate culture level. The study points that the possible lack of a supportive corporate culture and the failure of the leaders to cultivate leadership cultures may become an impediment to realizing the aspirations of servant leadership.

Conclusions

The study has reported and discussed the results of the findings of the study in line with the three objectives that guided the study. The study makes two conclusions from these findings. First, the study concludes that there are various servant leadership dimensions that are relevant and applicable to the nonprofit organizations in Kenya. Towards this, the study extracted ten dimensions of servant leadership that managers in this sector can adopt. Secondly, the dimensions of servant leadership were found to have both positive and negative effects in the manner they impact the communities served by the sampled organizations. The dimensions with a positive effect are those touching on sense of community and uprightness while those exerting a negative effect are those touching on holistic approach to work and service to others. The study observed that the virtue of humility is core to the kind of influence the dimensions of servant leadership will realize in the organizations while mobilizing followers to work in achieving the aspirations of servant leadership.

The study recognizes several limitations that form the basis for future research. The current study advanced its arguments on the basis of the effect of the four leadership components of servant leadership namely; holistic approach to work, sense of community, service to others and uprightness. The authors did not delve into explaining the possible justifications as to why the other six extracted components though found relevant yet were not significant. In addition, the data was obtained as self-reported assessment by the leaders in the nonprofit organizations. The scope of the context also limited the study in that, the current study was done among organizations based in Nairobi County and excluded those that are operating in the country side.

The study therefore suggests that future research focuses on several areas. First, there is need to study the remaining six components of servant leadership namely; empowerment, building relations, drive towards development, morality, accountability to the community and accountability to stakeholders so as to better offer explanations on how they contribute to community impact. Such efforts can extend the contextual scope to include nonprofit organizations operating outside the Nairobi county as well consider obtaining data on servant leadership attributes from both leaders and followers.

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Author Contributions: Conceptualization, Methodology, Data Collection, Formal Analysis, Writing—Original Draft Preparation, Writing—Review And Editing: Equal Contribution by authors. All authors have read and agreed to the published the final version of the manuscript.

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Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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