

## Emotional Exchange on Team Performance in Non-Governmental Agricultural Organizations in Kenya

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### Abstract

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*This study sought to establish the influence of emotional exchange on team performance in non-governmental agricultural organizations in Kenya. The study adopted convergent mixed method research design which integrates quantitative and qualitative data and pragmatism philosophy. The target population was NGOs operating in the agricultural sector in Kenya whose list was obtained from NGO Coordination Board. Data was collected using questionnaire as the main tool with interview guide used to triangulate the results from employees in the sector. Results revealed that emotional exchange in terms of gratitude, empathy, respect, and assertive accounts for 29.2% of team performance in Agricultural NGOs. Emotional exchange has a statistically significant influence on team performance ( $t = 9.294, p < 0.05$ ) which implies that emotional exchange in terms of in gratitude, respect, empathy and assertion towards employees significantly impacts on team performance in the NGOs. As a result, the null hypothesis hypotheses was rejected and inferred that emotional exchange has a statistically significant influence on team performance in non-governmental agricultural organizations. It was thus inferred that emotional exchange (bring in the components of emotional exchange) has a significant influence on team performance in the sector. In lieu of this, it is recommended that the NGOs need to enhance stable emotions that create an environment that fosters productivity, while unstable emotions cause resource-draining effect that weakens employees' ability to remain engaged and innovative (should capture the constructs appropriately).*

**Keywords:** Emotional Exchange, Team Performance, Non-Governmental Agricultural Organizations.

### Introduction

Servant leadership is considered a holistic leadership approach that involves influencing followers in multiple dimensions including emotional, ethical and spiritual values in way that empowers them to develop full potential (Eva et al., 2018). Like other organizations, NGOs are encouraged to transcend the traditional leadership approach, inclined towards achieving respect, obedience, and cooperation and instead adopt a leadership approach characterized by moral values, servanthood, and commitment to the achievement of the vision and goals of an organization. Servant leadership is characterized by among others

emotional exchange. Emotional exchange refers to the empathetic behaviours of leaders which makes them to be sensitive to followers' feelings. Emotional exchange as part of servant leadership includes, gratitude, empathy, respect, and assertive with gratitude embodying compassionate response to grateful emotions and reaction to the caring attitudes of a servant leader (Baykal et al., 2018). As opined by psychologists, humans often experience positive and negative emotions that influence their responses and reactions to things or events (Saleem et al., 2020). Organizational scholars and commentators agree on the significant effect of positive emotions, including contentment and gratitude, on employees' effectiveness and optimal performance. According to Baykal et al. (2018), gratitude has positive emotion that facilitates learning of new ideas and caused individuals to become creative. Servant leadership is empowering. In this regard, team members are more likely to feel gratitude towards and respond to the feeling through a positive attitude and directing their effort towards accomplishing team tasks. In addition, the team members respond by engaging in creative and innovative ideas leading to high team performance (Blanchard et al., 2018).

Empathy on the other hand, according to Jit et al. (2017) is the ability to understand the emotions, feelings and attitudes of others. Empathy complements knowledge and human resource exchanges by stimulating team members to comprehend and apprehend each other's emotional state. Blanchard et al. (2018) noted that group and individual empathy mediated relationships between diversity in the team fostering performance at individual and team levels. Cultivating empathic behaviors in organization teams has proven effective in driving high team success especially in times of crisis (Zivkovic, 2022). With increased globalization, many organizations have shown commitment to promote diversity and inclusivity requiring the entities to embrace empathic behaviors to improve team cohesion and collaboration. Servant leadership express behaviours such as compassion, listening and empathy to create an environment where diverse groups feel appreciated, supported and accepted. This is important in building employees' emotional and psychological health especially in the increasingly multicultural environment.

Respect reflects a leader's behaviours that signal to followers that they hold them in equal esteem and worth despite the hierarchical differences. Research has shown that employees' value respectful leadership (Munene & Nyaga, 2021; Blanchard et al., 2018). Servant leaders conduct themselves with dignity and respect and believe that employees must be treated with respect and humility (Saleem et al., 2020). Literature has highlighted that respectful leadership weakens a leader's effectiveness. From an organizational psychology perspective, employees need to be valued in an organization that demands that leaders engage and treat employees respectfully to create self-determination experiences. Through these experiences, the employee identifies with the servant leader's vision and goals, fostering team performance. According to Munene and Nyaga (2021), a servant leader not only consults but also respects and values the inputs of an organization's team members. This behavior influences attentive listening, participation and engagement on the team and fulfilling the members' emotional needs.

Finally, assertive as a construct of emotional exchange characterizes how employees react and respond to situations where a leader's position or interests' conflict with the employees (Northouse, 2019). Marques (2010) states that effective communication and respectful leadership, are important mediators of positive reactions in conflicting situations. Servant leadership allows team members to express their opinions and ideas and fosters collective input in decision-making (Njiiri et al., 2021). It accelerates

problem-solving, reduces conflict among team members and increases team performance. Ferris (2020) also found that assertive servant leaders provide their team members with periodic and constructive feedback, which enables them to improve their performance. It is important to note that excessive assertiveness or lack of it is perceived as leadership weakness. This is because assertive leadership behaviours can be reactive, leading to hostility and disrespect towards followers. Dewi et al. (2019) highlighted the under-research role of servant leadership in driving NGO accountability. Zarei and Bagozzi (2022) found that despite the profound impact of servant leadership on organizational performance, there was a major literature gap concerning the importance of the leadership approach on creativity and performance. Eva et al. (2019) identified a literature gap on servant leadership and suggested the need to generate more studies related to the phenomenon to help understand its impact on followers, teams and organization performance. The literature gap highlighted in this study provided the rationale for this study.

### **Literature Review**

The literature review presents the theoretical and conceptual background of the study. It also includes a review of empirical literature pertinent to the subject of study. The study was founded on the leader-member exchange (LMX) theory. Leadership literature offers substantial theoretical perspectives to support the underlying principles of servant leadership (Northouse, 2019; Randel et al. 2018; Davis, 2017). The premise of servant leadership is that a leader's motivation and role of service to others are key determinants of an employee's commitment to the leadership goal and effective contribution to the teamwork.

### **Theoretical Literature**

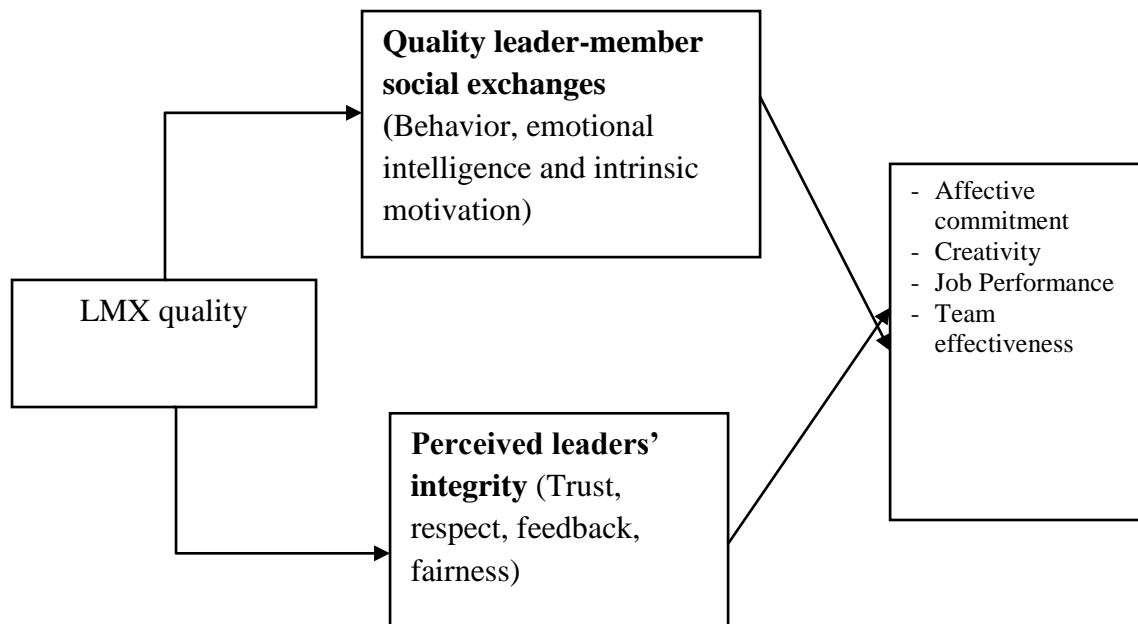
This study was founded on the leader-member exchange (LMX) theory which proposes a dual relationship-focused approach to leadership. The theory suggests that leaders and employees build strong interrelationships based on their social exchanges, which affects employees' performance (Alo & Arslan, 2022). According to Siyal and Peng (2018), the underlying assumption of the LMX theory is that leaders can establish diverse relationships with their employees, including low and high quality. High-quality social exchanges are characterized by trust, respect, feedback, loyalty, information exchange and commitment (Alo & Arslan, 2018). Low-quality social exchanges reflect low interaction and support, psychological withdrawal, reduced job satisfaction, and high turnover. Intrinsic motivation and increased work engagement are key outcomes of high-quality social exchanges and reflect employees' ability to self-control and participate fully in their work. Alo and Arslan (2022) stated that intrinsic motivation was an important aspect of workplace productivity because it involved strengthening employees' working conditions, including providing opportunities for growth and recognizing outstanding performances. Employees that experienced intrinsic motivations were more likely to feel psychologically safe, and the outcome was increased work engagement. Based on this evidence, Aggarwal et al. (2021) concluded that performance and competence were major currencies in the leader-follower social exchanges leading to increased trust.

Many researchers have applied the LMX theory to demonstrate the impact of social exchanges relationships between leader and employees. While past literature has shown that high quality LMX influences the attitude and behaviors of members of a team (Siyal & peng, 2018), few studies have focused on the social exchanges that occur between the

team members and their leader (Alo & Arslan, 2022). This study used the LMX theory as an overarching framework to examine the social interaction between servant leaders, employees and coworkers, which influences team performance. In the context of NGOs, the LMX theory provides an important theoretical framework to understand internal function of organization teams. Applying the framework in this study helped explain servant leader-employee relationships and demonstrate resulting changes in employee attitude and personality, emotional intelligence and intrinsic values (Akdol & Arikboga, 2017). LMX was used to describe the strengths of relationships between servant leaders and team members in NGOs. What LMX theory implies for NGO leaders is that servant leadership influences employees through the relationship they establish with them. The relationships build naturally from work relations and individual interactions between a servant leader and followers. Siyal and Peng (2018) emphasized that some leaders may fail to recognize the power derived from the relationships despite significantly influencing employees' attitudes and behaviour. The LMX theory also reveals some of the risks of servant leadership in the workplace. Favoritisms and unfairness may sometimes characterize the environment created by servant leaders.

As evidenced in past research (Alo & Arslan, 2022; Zou et al. 2015), LMX demonstrate servant leaders as moderators of ethical and trusting behaviors among employees. The LMX theory was important in creating insights on the association between servant leadership and team performance in NGOs. It helped demonstrate how servant leaders influence the development of trusting, responsible and mutually beneficial relationships that lead to high team performance. LMX demonstrates the servant leaders' explicit focus on leadership ethics and integrity to cultivate social relations, facilitate high-quality relationships and influence intrinsic motivations. Servant leaders socialize with their followers while providing guidance, role modelling and treating them with respect to build strong relationships. Alo and Arslan (2022) also noted that servant leaders demonstrate fairness and psychological empowerment behaviors, which allow the leaders to treat employees with a sense of dignity, respect and support them emotionally. LMX was a viable model to test servant leader-employee relationships and identify associated influence on team performance in NGOs.

A servant leader influences high-quality social exchanges by showing trust, respect, feedback, and fairness to their followers. In the process of social interaction, the leader provides guidance, role modelling and treating them with respect to build strong interrelationships. This influences changes in employee attitude and personality, emotional intelligence and intrinsic values and results to high commitment, creativity, high job performance and team effectiveness. This is illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: LMX Leadership**

### Empirical Review

Liu and Liu (2013) studied the influence mechanism of team emotional climate on the team's performance in terms of innovation. The study findings indicate that emotional labor moderates the relationship between team performance and a positive emotional climate. Results of data analysis from data collected from 85 team leaders and 475 team members using questionnaires indicate that a positive emotional climate within a team results in increased team efficacy. Emotional labor as an aspect of emotional exchange has resource-draining effects that result in a weakened relationship between team innovation and emotional climate. High emotional labor results in increased team innovation, which enhances performance. Ilies et al. (2013) opine that a leader's emotional expressiveness positively affects the follower's effort. The researchers utilize a sample of 198 mid-level managers as participants in their study. The study's findings indicate that a leader's emotional expressiveness positively affects subordinates' extra effort, influencing their perception of leadership effectiveness.

Cox et al. (2021) studied the impact of emotional intelligence and emotional contagion and its implication on teams. Positive emotions are vital in enhancing employee willingness to act positively, with negative emotions do the opposite. Leaders must be aware of their emotions as their negative emotions spread fast. Regulating emotions is crucial to promoting team success and performance. Acknowledging team emotions is essential to ensure connectedness and a culture of inclusion which cultivates teamwork and improved performance. Failure to acknowledge team members' emotions can result in diminished motivation and engagement. Lack of emotional contagion creates a non-inclusive culture that results in reduced employee productivity. Barsade (2002) observes that group emotional contagion influences work dynamics. The study examining

individual attitudes, behaviour, mood and group-level dynamics shows a significant effect of emotional contagion on group processes and attitudes at the individual level. Positive emotional contagion among team members results in improved cooperation, decreased conflict and increased perceived task performance.

Wan et al. (2022) evaluate the impact of emotional leadership on subordinates' job performance. Employee emotions significantly impact job performance, implying that a leader can influence their subordinates' productivity through emotional contagion. The results of hierarchical regression analysis from 362 respondents show that emotional leadership positively affects job performance. Besides, the positive emotions of subordinates partially mediate the relationship between subordinates' job performance and emotional leadership. The exchange of positive emotions is linked with workforce motivation and job satisfaction, increasing performance. Promoting positive emotional exchange is essential to ensure productive work performance by employees.

In a study evaluating the impact of emotional contagion on the work performance of employees, Ekanayake and Weerasinghe (2019) assert that individuals possess various emotions, and they capture the emotions of others despite their productiveness and effectiveness. Researchers use a descriptive cross-sectional study to assess the effect of emotional contagion on performance. Data analysis results of descriptive statistics from a sample of 100 respondents indicate that emotional contagion has a significant positive relationship with work performance. Managers should focus on promoting positive emotions to boost the morale of their subordinates within teams. Managing emotions within teams and the entire organization is essential to promote productivity by supporting work performance.

Shemla et al. (2020) studied how to unlock the performance potential of functionally diverse teams by determining the role of the leader's mood. A multicore lagged design field study is selected to investigate 66 teams from large financial services firms to determine how a leader's mood determines the team's performance potential. The teams provided a sample of 304 participants from whom primary data was collected. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis is applied for data analysis. Study findings from test hypotheses indicate that emotions and positive leader's mood moderate the effect of team diversity, collaborative team identification and team performance. A high leader's mood creates a strong relationship between team performance and team functional diversity. A high level of a leader's negative mood and functional diversity positively affect information elaboration in teams. Understanding the impact of the leader's mood is vital to determine how such factors foster the performance of diverse teams. Emotional displays and exchanges in a diverse team can influence members' moods and behaviour, thereby impacting team processes and performance.

González-Anta et al. (2020) assess the effect of emotional management on collaboration and team performance. Virtual teams encounter, diversity and dispersion challenges that negatively affect performance. Managing team emotions fosters team collaboration based on commitment, communication and trust. In the study, 53 four-member teams were selected for data collection. Findings indicate that team's emotional management intervention is positively associated with commitment and trust. The increased trust and commitment positively affect teams' performance. Managing team emotions in terms of exchange is essential to promote collaboration capacity and enhance performance in virtual teams.

Kim et al. (2022) evaluated the interplay between leader-member exchange and peer mentoring on team performance through team potency. The researcher selected a sample of 111 teams from 25 different organizations in China. Researchers collected data from respondents comprising 111 supervisors and 592 employees using questionnaires. Researchers employed multilevel path analyses to analyze the collected data. The effect of interaction was tested using the Johnson-Neyman technique. Findings show that peer mentoring moderates the relationship between leader-member exchange team performance and team potency. Peer mentoring positively and indirectly affects team performance through team potency. Hence, in team setup, mentoring has a crucial role in promoting team performance through the exchange between team members and the team leader.

### **Methodology**

This study adopted convergent mixed method research design which integrates quantitative and qualitative data. The study population included 33 NGOs operating in the agricultural sector. There were 792 employees in the 33 agricultural NGOs. This study thus sought to collect data from agricultural NGOs employees to determine how servant leadership affects team performance. This study used stratified random sampling method to draw the study sample from the target population. The sample size for this study was 266. Thirty respondents from the sampled respondents were used to answer the interview questions. This study used questionnaires as the primary tool of data collection. In addition, interview guides were used to collect qualitative data. Data was analyzed at two levels namely, quantitative data analysis and qualitative data analysis. A regression model was constructed to establish the influence of emotional exchange on team performance among agricultural NGOs.

### **Findings**

Findings are presented following the data analysis. They include demographic characteristics of the respondents, descriptive and inferential statistics that answer the research question.

#### ***Demographic Characteristics***

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are illustrated in Table 1.

**Table 1: Demographics**

Variable	Indicator	Percentage
Gender	Male	52.3%
	Female	47.7%
Academic Qualification	Certificate	18.5%
	Diploma	16.1%
	Undergraduate degree	26.9%
	Masters' degree	22.7%
	Doctorate degree	15.7%
Age	18 – 25 years	17.4%
	26 – 33 years	28.2%
	34 – 41 years	20.6%
	42 – 50 years	19.9%
	Above 50 years.	13.9%
Work Experience	0 – 2 years	30.0%
	3 – 4 years	34.1%
	More than 4 years	35.9%
Level in Management	Head of department	22.7%
	Head of section	39.5%
	Head of sub-department	37.8%

## Descriptive Statistics

### *Emotional Exchange*

Emotional exchange was assessed on a 5-point Likert scale. Data was analyzed by computing the mean score of the responses and interpreted as 1.0-1.4=Strongly Disagree, 1.5-2.4= Disagree, 2.5-3.4= Moderately Agree, 3.5-4.4= Agree, 4.5-5.0= Strongly Agree. Table 2 highlights the mean score and standard deviation for the descriptive statistics.

**Table 21. Emotional Exchange**

Emotional Exchange	Mean	Std. Deviation
Employees are appreciated, and they have responded by directing their effort towards accomplishing team tasks.	4.1	1.0
Good performance is appreciated among employees.	4.0	0.9
Employees are recognized in their efforts.	3.8	0.8
Employees who are appreciated are creative and innovative leading to high team performance.	3.7	1.1
Employees have a positive emotion that facilitates learning of new ideas and creativity among employees.	3.6	1.1
Team-level emotional skills significantly impact the performance of tasks.	4.0	1.0
Team emotions is essential to ensure connectedness and a culture of inclusion which cultivates teamwork and improved performance.	3.9	0.9
The distinct emotional skills in the team determine both	3.6	1.1

individual and team performance.

Our leader's emotional expressiveness positively affects subordinates' extra effort, influencing their perception of leadership effectiveness.	3.6	1.2
Our team leaders induce a positive emotional climate that promotes team performance.	3.5	1.1
Employees present their opinion in a positive manner without being offensive.	4.1	0.9
Employees have clear work instructions.	3.9	0.9
Employees uphold a high morality in their work.	3.7	1.0
Employees make decision from good judgement	3.6	1.1
Employees seek to prove to their ideas in responsive way	3.5	1.2
Employees worthiness to the organization is recognized and appreciated	3.6	0.9
Employees are held in equal esteem and worth despite the hierarchical differences in the organization.	3.5	1.1
Employees are consulted and their inputs considered in decision.	3.5	1.1
Employees are treated with respect and humility.	3.4	1.0
There is a respectful engagement among employees.	3.3	1.2

### ***Regression results of the relationship between Emotional Exchange and Team Performance***

A regression model was constructed with team performance as the dependent variable and emotional exchange was the independent variable. Results in Table 4 show that the regression model R square = 0.292. This imply that emotional exchnage accounts for 29.2% of team performance in Agricultural NGOs while the remaining 71.8% is explained by other variables not included in the model.

**Table 4. Model Summary on Emotional Exchange**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.541a	0.292	0.289	0.4196

a Predictors: (Constant), Emotional Exchange

ANOVA was used to ascertain the significant of the model in predicting the dependent variable. The ANOVA results in Table 5 showed that emotional exchange correctly predicts team performance ( $F(1,209) = 86.379, p < .05$ ).

**Table 5. ANOVA on Emotional Exchange**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	15.208	1	15.208	86.379	.000b
	Residual	36.797	209	0.176		
	Total	52.005	210			

a Dependent Variable: Team Performance

b Predictors: (Constant), Emotional Exchange

Results in Table 6 show that emotional exchange had a statistically significant influence on team performance ( $t = 9.294$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). According to results one unit increase in emotional exchange improved team performance by 67.4% ( $\beta = 0.674$ ). The t-statistics results showed that  $t = 9.294$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . Therefore, there was enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that emotional exchange has a statistically significant influence on team performance in non-governmental agricultural organizations.

**Table 6. Coefficients on Emotional Exchange**

Model		Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig.
		Coefficients				
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.181	0.263		4.486	0.000
	Emotional Exchange	0.674	0.073	0.541	9.294	0.000

a Dependent Variable: Team Performance

In addition to the survey questionnaire, the researcher also engaged key informants in in-depth interview on the influence of emotional exchange on team performance. Respondents noted that through gratitude team members appreciate each other which positively impacts on their morale at work. They noted that people feel good when they are appreciated and makes them perform better. Others were of the opinion that having team where there is mutual appreciation, they are encouraged and end up putting in more effort at work which positively influence performance. Further that leaders that demonstrate empathy reassure team members in times of challenges at work for instance one respondent stated that leaders need to show empathy to junior employees in instances where they face challenges including delay salary or hard management decisions.

Respect was cited important for organizational efficiency such that where there is disrespect there is a lot of friction and sometimes employees are dismissed. One respondent gave an instance where an intern contract was terminated when they disrespected their superior. However, it should be noted that respect should be earned and the superior also need to respect their subordinate. Assertiveness was cited as critical in ensuring the team is meeting their objectives. It was noted that a leader should assert their authority in their team such that if a leader becomes weaker the subordinate may become sluggish at work. They observed that leaders should set clear work plans and work distribution. This will provide a clear direction of work and put order in the team and this will ensure timely and effective delivery of project goals.

## Discussion

Leader's emotional expressiveness positively affects subordinates' extra effort, influencing their perception of leadership effectiveness (Ilies et al., 2013). Acknowledging team emotions is essential to ensure connectedness and a culture of inclusion which cultivates teamwork and improved performance (Cox et al., 2021). Consistently, findings here showed that emotional exchange accounts for 29.2% of team performance in Agricultural NGOs ( $R^2 = 0.292$ ). One unit increase in emotional exchange improved team performance by 67.4% ( $\beta = 0.674$ ). Similarly, Ekanayake and Weerasinghe (2019) reported similar findings and indicated that emotional contagion accounted for 15.7% of employee performance ( $p < .000$ ). Further, Liu and Liu, (2013)

indicated that leaders and organization teams can display positive or negative emotions that may impact team performance. Emotional contagion among team members or between members and their leaders is an important psychological capital that strengthens team enthusiasm and cohesion and reduces conflicts (Cox et al. 2021; Chen et al. 2019).

High-quality relationships stimulate positive emotions, moderately increasing team connectedness, cooperation and cohesion. In contrast, low-quality relationships stimulate less connection and emotions among team members resulting in poor collaboration and teamwork. Therefore, the study results highlighted the existence of emotional variability among team members, which affects the value and direction of employee strain. This means that different levels of emotions can influence team performance differently. Wan et al. (2022) highlighted the importance of regulating emotions in the team to avoid work-related strains. The researchers emphasized that organization teams should be emotionally bonded to influence a collaborative culture that improves team productivity.

The findings indicated that team members displayed their emotions through gratitude, empathy, respect and assertion. Employees were positive that when they are appreciated for their good performance, efforts, creativity and innovativeness, they develop positive emotions that drive their desire to achieve high task performance. The findings revealed that showing gratitude to employees raised their emotions and contributed to improved team performance. This view supported research findings from earlier studies, indicating that compassionate outcomes such as showing gratitude towards employees influence a sense of belonging, leading to a commitment to work (Baykal et al. 2018). Saleem et al. (2020) explained that employees often experience positive and negative emotions that varyingly influence their responses and reactions to tasks. This may result in varying performances.

The NGOs' employees also acknowledged that leaders showed empathy and respect, stimulated positive emotions among team members, increasing connectedness and strong relationships. Emotions are crucial in maintaining connectedness and cohesion within a team and supporting teamwork. Participants noted that possessing emotional skills was important to help regulate individual emotions. According to Jit et al. (2017) empathy is a key trait of effective leaders that enables them to recognize the emotions and feelings of their followers. The leaders' compassionate behaviors allow them to stimulate positive emotions and psychological health, building a cohesive and collaborative team. The findings indicated that having compassion also allowed leaders and team members to have respect for each other. Respect demonstrates that a leader treats subordinates with dignity and high esteem (Saleem et al., 2020). According to the participants, feeling respected enabled them to uphold high morality at work, make solid decisions and share their ideas with others resulting in improved individual and team performance. This means that leaders that communicate task requirements and respectively give feedback stimulate positive emotions, trust and commitment from team members.

Findings further showed that positive emotions are reflected through showing respect, empathy and gratitude. This contributes to an environment that fosters team proactivity through innovativeness and creativity. As indicated by Munene and Nyaga (2021) respectful leadership gives the employees the impression that their leader holds them in high esteem and respected their contribution towards team goals. The leader recognizes and appreciates members' opinions, ideas and input in the team. Based on the findings, the feeling of belongingness derived from the unconditional respect shown by leaders stimulates honesty, politeness and genuine interest among employees resulting in

increased commitment towards tasks. The emotional exchange allows team members to express themselves without fear of reprisal because their leader treats them with respect and dignity. This means the leader values their input towards the achievement of team goals.

The growing need for agricultural NGOs to build a diverse and inclusive organization team requires servant leaders to embrace empathy, respect, and gratitude for employees. This study's findings reaffirm this commitment and assert that empathy, compassion and respect are important predictors of team cohesion and performance. The findings imply that cultivating empathic and compassionate behaviours in today's multicultural environment can improve performance (Zivkovic, 2022). Servant leaders at the organizations need to understand the mediating effect of these behaviours on team and leadership effectiveness. According to Moore et al. (2020), empathy, respect and emotional control are emotional intelligence competencies that can be developed within the workplace to foster effective relationships between leaders and organizational teams. Neuroscience and psychology studies have corresponded with this study's findings by recognizing three aspects of emotional contagion: gratitude, empathic concerns and compassionate behaviors (Kane et al. 2023).

This study's findings assert that the team's emotional contagion creates a positive mood among the team members influencing their work dynamics. The predicted effect of emotional exchanges, including showing empathy, respect and gratitude to others, was emphasized in this study. Some studies have found differences in the effect of emotional exchanges based on the degree of empathy, respect and compassion demonstrated by team members and the energy level at which leaders promote emotional exchanges in the team. Barsade et al. (2018) found that production increased as employees experienced a higher degree of compassion and respect from their leaders. The employees felt appreciated, resulting in enhanced cooperation and reduced group conflict, resulting in effective work execution. West et al. (2017) reported that the degree of group members' attraction to one another and their leader and individual respect for one another predicted enhanced creativity, positive relationships and work performance.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the results, emotional exchange in terms of gratitude, respect, empathy and assertion towards employees has a statistically significant influence on team performance in non-governmental agricultural organizations in Kenya. In this regard, servant leaders who demonstrate ability to value individual input, creativity, innovativeness, and exceptional performance. Results show that employees perceive this as an impression of respect and gratitude. As a result, the employees develop a sense of belongingness, connectedness and cooperation within the team. Showing compassion towards subordinates' feelings and emotions allows the employees to stimulate positive emotions that are important in building their psychological health. Stable emotions create an environment that fosters productivity, while unstable emotions cause resource-draining effect that weakens employees' ability to remain engaged and innovative. In this regard, servant leaders must communicate respectfully, recognize their employees' emotions and feelings and acknowledge their inputs and efforts in decision-making.

Today's organizations are characterized by cross-cultural and multicultural environments hence adopting servant leadership encourages empathy, openness, inclusivity, integrity and respect, influencing high team performance. Agricultural NGOs are encouraged to

adopt servant leadership to provide an approach towards workforce management that considers individual differences. The leadership styles encourage showing respect, compassion, and empathy should originate from both the leaders and employees. Empathy leadership builds cohesion and tolerance for each other in the organization. Compassionate leadership will enable leaders to identify, nurture and harness stable emotions and unique qualities to improve their competences. Integrating these traits in the leadership culture of the NGOs will enhance leaders' effectiveness, especially when dealing with complex situations.

### Recommendations

Non-governmental agricultural organizations are encouraged to cultivate a servant leadership trait that offers a comprehensive method of managing a workforce, considering individual variances. This calls for mutual respect, kindness, and empathy that need to be fostered between managers and their staff. Employees are also encouraged to show tolerance and consideration for one another within the team. The leaders should recognize, value, and capitalize on stable emotions and distinctive personal traits to enhance team success.

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