

## **Is Empowering Shared Leadership Driving Task Performance in Kenya's Banking Sector?**

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### **Abstract**

*Decentralizing authority is increasingly vital for the banking sector in emerging economies. This study explored the influence of empowering shared leadership on task performance in commercial banks in Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive correlational research design with stratified sampling of managers from all the 39 registered commercial banks in Kenya. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from 307 respondents from a target 324 managers. Data analysis used both descriptive and inferential models processed through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program. Results revealed empowering shared leadership on task performance in commercial banks in Kenya was statistically significant,  $R^2 = 0.228$ ,  $F(1, 306) = 13.251$ ,  $p\text{-value} < .05$ . This shows 22.8% of the task performance in commercial banks in Kenya is attributed to empowering shared leadership while the remaining 77.2% can be attributed to other factors not included in the study and the error term. Additionally, regression coefficient indicated the empowering shared leadership statistically affects the task performance in commercial banks in Kenya ( $\beta = .427$ ,  $t = 3.640$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The study concluded that empowering shared leadership was an important function of shared leadership for commercial banks in Kenya achieving effectiveness and efficiency in performance. Practical implications urge commercial banks in Kenya to institutionalize all the aspects of empowering shared leadership including beliefs, accomplishments, uniqueness and technology. This research bridges a critical gap in shared leadership literature offering empirical evidence and actionable strategies for sector wide transformation.*

**Keywords:** *Beliefs, Accomplishments, Uniqueness, Technology, Kenya*

### **Introduction**

Leadership theory has evolved significantly from its traditional typologies, which have long emphasized styles such as autocratic, laissez-faire, transformational, transactional, and participative leadership. While these frameworks remain foundational, the complexities of contemporary organizational life have given rise to more dynamic and hybrid models, including shared leadership, strategic leadership, servant leadership, adaptive leadership, and charismatic leadership (Song et al., 2020). Among these, shared leadership has emerged as a particularly compelling approach, especially in performance-driven environments requiring decentralized knowledge work and collaborative decision making. Conceptually, shared leadership shifts the locus of authority from a singular formal leader to a distributed, peer-driven process, wherein leadership roles and responsibilities are enacted by multiple members of a team (Wu et al., 2020). This model may manifest in various organizational forms, such as rule by committee, or micro enterprise units with collective decision-making power (Bouwer, 2023). Increasing evidence suggests that shared leadership, particularly its empowering dimension, characterized by autonomy, mutual accountability, and participative goal setting can enhance effectiveness and drive superior task performance. This paper investigates this

proposition within the context of Kenya's commercial banking sector, asking: Is empowering shared leadership driving task performance?

## **Background**

The banking sector has traditionally relied on vertical leadership structures, with decision-making authority centralized among top executives such as Chief Executive Officers or senior management teams. While this model offers clear command and control, its suitability is increasingly questioned in light of the growing demand for innovation, cross-functional collaboration, and adaptability in response to the complex, evolving nature of modern business environments. In today's commercial organizations, particularly in financial services, teams have become central to driving performance. As a result, leadership approaches that foster empowerment, shared responsibility, and distributed decision-making are gaining traction. Regionally, scholars have explored empowering leadership practices specifically in banks with Saleem et al. (2019) focusing on commercial banks across Pakistan districts to establish how empowering employees played a role in increasing commitment from the banking employees. In their study, Saleem et al. (2019) found that the empowering regimes translated to increased performance in emerging Pakistan banking industry.

Inspired by such findings, the current study seeks to establish the influence of empowering shared leadership on task performance in Kenya's commercial banking sector. The significance of this inquiry lies in the fact that commercial banks are a cornerstone of Kenya's financial system, and their performance is widely regarded as a proxy for broader economic health. Specifically, understanding how empowering shared leadership contributes to task performance in this context is critical for scholars, practitioners, and policy makers alike. This study therefore sought to examine the influence of empowering shared leadership on task performance across all the 3 tiers of commercial banks in Kenya.

## **Literature Review**

Theoretical frameworks underpinning shared leadership often draw upon various leadership theories such as transformational leadership, empowering leadership and other vertical leadership theories. Shared leadership posits that leadership is an emergent property of the team, where team members mutually influence each other, and leadership roles are distributed among the team members (Carson, 2019). It deviates from the traditional leadership approaches centered around the formal appointed leaders where the focus is on top-down vertical influence. Shared leadership has been theorized in multiple ways. Carson (2019) defined shared leadership as an emergent team property that results from the distribution of leadership influence across multiple team members. From this perspective, shared leadership emphasizes the mutual influence processes that are ingrained in interactions among team members.

### ***Shared Leadership Theory***

Leadership is generally theorized as a top-down influence. Consequently, success or failure of organizations has been attributed to chief executive officers and managing directors, yet there is growing recognition that leadership is a more complex concept, that evolves from multiple individuals especially in the age of knowledge work. Martin et al. (2018) noted that the concept of leadership being distributed beyond a single leader goes back 50 years ago and a structure of shared leadership proposes to leverage the formal leader role, in addition to the leadership that emerges from within the team itself. Shared leadership theory is attributed to a seminal paper by Pearce and Sims (2000) who popularized the theoretical construct as a group level

phenomenon which entails shared influence between and among teams influencing group level outcomes such as group effectiveness. From this perspective, empowering leadership behavior forms a unique dimension of shared leadership, emphasizing autonomy and decentralization of power to lower levels. Zeier et al. (2021) likened shared leadership to team sport because it provides an opportunity for individuals to take up leadership roles. In such cases, the formal leaders provide encouragement and support, acting as role models.

Many studies on empowering leadership behaviours have been found to have relevance for performance. Saputra et al. (2023) examined the linkage between participative decision-making behaviors of empowering leaders on employee performance in the banking sector in Indonesia. Through a purposive sampling technique, the study collected data from 217 participants from 27 Indonesian banks using survey questionnaires sent by google docs. Empowering leadership was operationalized through four dimensions which included meaningful work, participating in decision making, autonomy from bureaucracy and confidence in high performance. Using structural equation modelling to analyse the data, the findings showed that empowering leader behaviors positively influenced performance of bank employees ( $\beta = 0.272, p \leq 0.001$ ). This positive influence is strengthened when employees have trust in their managers. The studies by Saputra et al. (2023) and Gu et al. (2023) concluded that empowerment plays an important role in project contexts as it affects both work performance and project success. These similar findings further suggest that employees will tend to adopt their manager's empowering behaviours as a reference point to embrace empowerment in their work settings. Such employees will thus be more participative in company decisions and will act more autonomously in their own work by going beyond routine tasks.

In another study focusing on the power of leadership styles and performance outcomes, Kim and Beehr (2021) unraveled the link between empowering leadership on employee work behaviors through trust in the leader and psychological capital in a serial mediation model. Anchored in the conservation of resources theoretical frame, the study's aim was to examine the role of employee's psychological capital and leader trust as two mediating resources in the relationship between empowering leadership and work behaviors through job crafting. The study sample comprised full time employees in various sectors such as finance, sales and technology in the USA and adopted a longitudinal approach to administer a survey instrument through an online platform. Empowering leadership was measured using 12 measurement items, adopted from Ahn and Bessiere (2022), and comprised four sub dimensions: participation in decision making, autonomy, confidence in high performance and meaning of work. Findings revealed direct effects between empowering leadership behaviors to worker behaviors through trust and employee psychological resources which further mediate the relationship to job crafting that encourages employees to take charge of their own jobs.

However, there were other studies with contrary opinion on the influence of empowering shared leadership. Saleem et al. (2019) in their Pakistani study of commercial banks established that there was growing lack of employer-trust in the growing banking industry thus requiring more practical application of other leadership systems to have the impact of empowering shared leadership. From the Pakistani study, there is a suggestion that empowering shared leadership requires some controls or moderation of some sort to avoid lack of trust in what could appear to be excess empowerment leading to lowered performance. Elsewhere in a Malaysian study by Kimpaha et al. (2023), results indicated that with regards to autonomy constructs, work method, work schedule and work criterion did not exhibit a significant relationship to creative performance. This has the clear implication that not all constructs of empowering sharing

leadership could work towards improving performance especially in the commercial banks of Kenya.

## **Methodology**

### ***Population and Study Site***

The study adopted a positivist philosophy which supports the use of objective, quantifiable data to test hypotheses. A positivist stance is particularly appropriate in empirical investigations seeking to establish causal relationships between leadership constructs and performance outcomes (Dougherty et al., 2019). The positivist philosophy enables testing of results that could spur further research (Dougherty et al., 2019). The study focused on the commercial banking sector in Kenya, targeting a population of 10,956 managers drawn from all institutions licensed under the banking act and regulated by the Central Bank of Kenya (CBK) to operate as full-service commercial banks. As of 2023, this population comprised of 38 registered commercial banks and one licensed mortgage finance company (CBK, 2023). Kenya's banking sector is categorized into three tiers, Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3, based on asset size, market share, and customer base. Tier 1 includes 9 large banks, Tier 2 comprises 8 medium-sized banks, and Tier 3 includes 22 smaller banks (CBK, 2023). This tiered classification provided a meaningful framework for sampling ensuring representation across the diverse operational scales within the industry.

### ***Sample and Data Collection***

Respondents were drawn from managerial cadres within the commercial banks, given their direct and sustained involvement in leadership and performance operations. Managers were specifically targeted because they are instrumental in fostering shared leadership practices and implementing performance operations within their organizations. To ensure broad representation across the sector, the study sampled banks from all three tiers, specifically tier 1 comprising 9 large banks, tier 2 comprising 8 medium-sized banks, and Tier 3 comprising 22 small banks, as classified by CBK. Testing for a normal distribution with 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error for the population sampled, the study adopted a sample size of 324 managers using Cochran formula (1963) improved as adopted in Yamane formula (1967). Data were collected through a structured survey questionnaire, distributed using a drop-and-pick method to ensure accessibility and convenience for respondents. Emails and physical contacts for respondents were used to follow-up with mini-interviews conducted to introduce the purpose of the study to most respondents across the banks.

## **Results and Findings**

The study used SPSS version 26 to produce all results. The key statistical analysis involved a model summary and correlation with regression to test the null hypothesis:

*H<sub>0</sub>: Empowering Shared Leadership does not significantly influence task performance in commercial banks in Kenya.*

### ***Regression Model Summary of Empowering Shared Leadership on Task Performance***

Table 1 shows the model summary results. The output indicates that the empowering shared leadership on task performance in commercial banks in Kenya is statistically significant,  $R^2 = 0.228$ ,  $F(1, 306) = 13.251$ ,  $p\text{-value} < .05$ . This shows 22.8% of the task performance in

commercial banks in Kenya is attributed to empowering shared leadership while the remaining 77.2% can be attributed to other factors not included in the study and the error term.

**Table 1: Model Summary of Empowering Shared Leadership on Task Performance**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.557 <sup>a</sup>	.228	.247	.41680	.051	13.251	1	306	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Empowering Shared Leadership

b. Dependent Variable: Task Performance

***Regression ANOVA of Empowering Shared Leadership on Task Performance***

Table 2 shows the Regression ANOVA. The output indicates that empowering shared leadership had a significant effect on task performance  $F(1, 306) = 13.251, p < .05$ . This shows the regression model used was suitable for predicting the outcome variable of the influence of empowering shared leadership on the task performance in commercial banks in Kenya.

**Table 2: Regression ANOVA of Empowering Shared Leadership on Performance**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.302	1	2.302	13.251	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	42.562	306	.174		
	Total	44.864	307			

a. Dependent Variable: Task Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Empowering Shared Leadership

***Regression Coefficient of Empowering Shared Leadership on Task Performance***

To understand the beta effect of the empowering shared leadership on task performance, two coefficients output are presented and discussed. The first output shows the effect of the constructs of empowering shared leadership on task performance and the second shows the effect of the combined constructs of empowering shared leadership as independent variable to the task performance in commercial banks in Kenya.

Table 3 shows the results of the regression coefficient of the empowering shared leadership constructs. The output shows beliefs ( $\beta = .118, t = 3.480, p < .05$ ), accomplishments ( $\beta = .142, t = 1.211, p > .05$ ), uniqueness ( $\beta = .103, t = 2.308, p < .05$ ) and technology ( $\beta = .230, t = 2.622, p < .05$ ) as having a significant effect on the task performance in commercial banks in Kenya ( $p < .05$ ). This shows that a unit increase in beliefs increases the task performance in commercial

banks in Kenya by 0.118. A unit increase in accomplishments however does not increase the task performance in commercial banks in Kenya by 0.142 since it has an insignificant p-value of 0.105 ( $p > 0.05$ ). A unit increase in uniqueness increases the task performance in commercial banks in Kenya by 0.103. A unit increase in technology increases the task performance in commercial banks in Kenya by 0.230. These results indicate that technology exerts the strongest influence with a standardized beta coefficient of 0.230, while uniqueness has the least effect, contributing a beta change of 0.103.

**Table 3: Empowering Shared Leadership Coefficients on Task Performance**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.455	.247		9.941	.000
Beliefs	.208	.060	.118	3.480	.001
1 Accomplishments	.062	.038	.142	1.211	.105
Uniqueness	.132	.014	.103	2.308	.000
Technology	.126	.029	.230	2.622	.001

a. Dependent Variable: Task Performance<sub>2</sub>

b. Predictors: (Constant), Empowering Shared Leadership (Beliefs, Accomplishments, Uniqueness and Technology)

Table 4 shows the results of the regression coefficient. This shows that empowering shared leadership statistically affects the task performance in commercial banks in Kenya ( $\beta = .427$   $t = 3.640$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The beta of 0.427 shows that a unit of increase in empowering shared leadership increases task performance in commercial banks in Kenya by 0.427.

**Table 4: Empowering Shared Leadership Regression on Task Performance**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.644	.228		11.614	.000
1 Empowering Shared Leadership	.217	.060	.427	3.640	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Task Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Empowering Shared Leadership

As indicated in Table 4, the empowering shared leadership significantly predicted the task performance in commercial banks in Kenya ( $\beta = .427$   $t = 3.640$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This specific result led to the rejection of the null hypothesis and the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis that

*H<sub>1</sub>: Empowering shared leadership significantly influence task performance in commercial banks in Kenya.*

The study derived the model for empowering shared leadership and performance of commercial banks based on simple regression model:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \varepsilon$$

Where;

Y = Task Performance;

$\beta_0$  = Constant;

$\beta_1$  = Empowering Shared Leadership and

$\varepsilon$  = Error term.

$$Y = 2.644 + .427 X + .060 \varepsilon$$

## **Discussion**

Regression results for the current study showed model summary indicating that the empowering shared leadership on task performance in commercial banks in Kenya was statistically significant,  $R^2 = 0.228$ ,  $F(1, 306) = 13.251$ ,  $p\text{-value} < .05$ . This has the implication that empowering shared leadership had a positive significance on the effectiveness and efficiency of performance in the commercial banks of Kenya. The results are in line with other scholarly results from previous studies. Dahleez et al. (2022) studying reaction of leaders during crises in the Palestinian communities in the Middle East established that empowering leadership has positive effects on organization citizenship behaviours and risk-taking behaviours. Additionally, Dahleez et al. (2022) observed that with empowerment, teams will likely respond better to crises and emergency situations since their leaders encourage decentralized decisions by passing on control to their employees, providing opportunities for continuous learning and encouraging workers to adopt self-leading practices. Another study by Saleem et al. (2019) across commercial banks in Pakistan districts established that there was increased commitment from the banking employees when an increase in empowerment was affected. Regionally, Crittenden et al. (2019) in studying the gender involvement for IT infusion in the banking industry with the South African banking sector established that social efficacy and social capital bonding played a key role in the female involvement for bank performance. In their conclusion, Crittenden et al. (2019) pointed to specific actions including goal internalization, competence and perceived control as the key to leaders encouraging the women participants to get more involved in their field of operation thus having a positive effect on performance. The implication for this results by Crittenden et al. (2019) is that there is need to have female bank employees empowered to have competencies in IT field. The Kenyan position would therefore be that efficiency and effectiveness in performance would be enhanced when female members are exposed to IT training in the banking industry.

Regression coefficient results shows that empowering influence statistically affects the task performance in commercial banks in Kenya ( $\beta = .427$   $t = 3.640$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This has the implication that in the banking industry, empowering shared leadership has a positive significant influence on the effectiveness and efficiency of the banking industry. Other

previous studies have established similar results with Zheng et al. (2023) studying construction projects in China finding a direct positive relationship between empowering leadership and project performance ( $\gamma = 0.178$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Specifically, this Chinese study by Zheng et al. (2023) concluded that the positive relationship between empowering leadership and project performance was fully mediated by creative self-efficacy and leader-member exchange, while perceived overqualification moderated this relationship significantly. Accordingly, the findings suggest creativity and uniqueness in the banking industry as a stepping stone to performance. Furthermore, Saputra et al. (2023) in an Indonesian bank survey established that empowering leader behaviors positively influenced performance of bank employees ( $\beta = 0.272$ ,  $p \leq 0.001$ ). This effectively suggest that employees will tend to adopt their manager's empowering behaviors' as a reference point to embrace empowerment in their work settings. Such employees will thus be more participative in company decisions, will act more autonomously in their own work by going beyond routine tasks. Elsewhere in Pakistan, Ahmed et al. (2022) studying the education sector established that providing autonomy has the strongest impact on empowerment of employees, thus concluding that institutions should incorporate leaders who have confidence in power sharing instead of being sole authorities and that organizations should train their leaders and supervisors on empowering behaviours which encourage leaders to remove unnecessary restrictions to drive autonomous work. Kimpaha et al (2023) in a Malaysian study focusing on electrical and electronics manufacturing companies established that there was significant correlation between participative decision making and autonomy, which promoted greater efficiency and effectiveness of task execution as well as innovation. In other words, Kimpaha et al (2023) findings suggest that limited involvement of managers in defining work schedules, work criterion and work methods may be attributed to a decentralized decision making system across engineering firms, given the likely high levels of operational complexity in engineering tasks. What this implies in applying to the Kenya banking industry is that as much as empowering shared leadership was positive, there was need to limit the amount of empowerment especially in complex bank operations, thus leading to the need to have training of employees to achieve the desired high performance.

However, there were other studies with contrary opinion on the influence of empowering shared leadership. Saleem et al. (2019) in their Pakistani study of commercial banks established that there was growing lack of employer-trust in the growing banking industry thus requiring more practical application of other leadership systems to have the impact of empowering sharing influence. From the Pakistani study, there is a suggestion that empowering shared leadership requires some controls or moderation of some sort to avoid lack of trust in what could appear to be excess empowerment leading to lowered performance. Another study by Kang and Svensson (2019) in the Scandinavian countries suggested that antecedents of shared leadership center on formal team leader factors such as empowering leadership behaviors or transformational leadership behaviors in addition to team characteristics such as the internal team environment, comprising of a team's shared purpose, social support and task characteristics such as interdependent tasks that require team members to collaborate, and their voice is incorporated in decision making. Elsewhere in a study by Kimpaha et al (2023) conducted in Malaysia, results indicated that with regards to autonomy constructs, work method, work schedule and work criterion did not exhibit a significant relationship to creative performance. This has the clear implication that not all constructs of empowering sharing leadership could work towards improving performance especially within commercial banks in Kenya.

## **Conclusion**

Model summary output indicates that empowered shared leadership on task performance in commercial banks in Kenya is statistically significant,  $R^2 = 0.228$ ,  $F(1, 306) = 13.251$ ,  $p\text{-value} < .05$ . Additionally, regression beta coefficient results show that empowering shared leadership statistically affects the task performance in commercial banks in Kenya ( $\beta = .427$ ,  $t = 3.640$ ,  $p < .05$ ), thus resulting into the rejecting of null hypothesis of the study. This led to the conclusion that empowering shared leadership is an important function of shared leadership for commercial banks in Kenya achieving their effectiveness and efficiency necessary for performance improvement.

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