

Correlation between Team Competence and Church Growth: A Survey of Pentecostal Churches in Selected Counties in Kenya



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ABSTRACT: Pentecostal churches in Kenya principally function within a team-oriented leadership model, where the capabilities of leaders and their teams play a crucial role in the church's growth and sustainability. This study aimed at determining the relationship between team competence and the growth of selected Pentecostal churches in Kenya. A descriptive-correlational survey design was employed. The study targeted 7,626 clergy members from selected Pentecostal churches in five counties: Meru, Tharaka-Nithi, Laikipia, Embu, and Nyeri. Stratified random sampling technique was used to distribute questionnaires to respondents, attracting 321 participants. Data analysis was conducted using mean and standard deviation scores, alongside correlation and regression techniques in SPSS. Findings indicated a moderate yet statistically significant positive correlation between team competence and church growth ($r = .279$, $p < .01$). Regression analysis further confirmed that team competence is a significant predictor of church growth, $F(1, 318) = 26.94$, $p < .01$, accounting for 7.8% of the variance ($R^2 = .078$). These results highlight that team competence is not merely beneficial but essential for the continued expansion of Pentecostal churches in Kenya. The study underscores the importance of cultivating a competent leadership culture as a strategic imperative for ensuring long-term church growth and sustainability.

KEYWORDS: Church Growth, Clergymen, Team Competence, Team Leadership, Pentecostal Church

I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of competence has a long historical foundation. Evidence suggests that competence-based selection of individuals for leadership and work roles dates back over 3,000 years to ancient China, where employees were chosen based on their abilities (Fang et al., 2024). Similarly, in fourth-century BC, India records indicate the use of competence as a criterion for assigning roles (Salman et al., 2019). In Roman times, the concept was applied in jurisprudence, while in the mid-20th century, it gained recognition in psychology and linguistics (Wargadinata, 2024). White, a U.S.-based psychologist, was among the first to define competence as the essential personality attributes necessary for high performance and motivation (Schneider, 2019). Over time, the application of competence has expanded to disciplines such as education, business administration, communication, psychology, and linguistics (Schneider, 2019). From a biblical perspective, competence was a key consideration in leadership selection (Rungsung, 2024). For instance, Moses was instructed to appoint "capable, God-fearing, and trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain" (Exodus 18:21, NIV 1995) to help him lead Israel through the wilderness, highlighting the critical role of competence in effective leadership.

Scholars have provided multiple definitions of competence, reflecting its broad application across disciplines. Schneider (2019) defines competence as the capacity to meet individual or social demands effectively or to perform tasks in line with expected standards. Supriya et al. (2023) expand on this by describing competence as a blend of knowledge, skills, strategic planning, behaviors, and abilities that enable individuals to perform efficiently. These characteristics are not only observable but also measurable, making them essential for job performance (Lotrecchiano et al., 2021). Additionally, Zdonek et al. (2017) view competence from both a narrow and broad perspective, incorporating skills and knowledge as well as personality traits, values, attitudes, and experience.

Competence exists at multiple levels, including individual, team, and organizational dimensions (Škrinjarić et al., 2022). At these levels, attributes such as trustworthiness, ability, benevolence, and integrity are fundamental (Colquitt & Baer, 2023). When these qualities are present, they foster strong, lasting bonds between leaders and team members, which is crucial for collective progress (Demaria, 2024).

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Given the significance of competence in leadership and organizational success, it is essential to determine its impact on church growth. Pentecostal churches in Kenya, in principle, operate within a team-based leadership structure, where the effectiveness of leaders and their teams can influence the expansion and sustainability of the church (Awino et al., 2021; Lucky, 2021). However, whether this translates to church growth has not been empirically examined. The vast field of research on team competence has largely been skewed to business enterprises, learning institutions, and the public sector (Yeoungdae et al., 2020; Rukuni et al., 2019; Maina & Mang'ana, 2022). Thus, limited research exists on how team competence affects church growth. This study, therefore, sought to extend empirical research on team competence and its implications on organizational outcomes into the faith-based sector by quantifying the correlation between team competence and church growth in Pentecostal churches in Kenya.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Competence in leadership is fundamental across various fields, influencing the ability of individuals and organizations to navigate contemporary challenges. Adero and Odiyo (2020) highlight the necessity of leadership skills that enhance performance in an era characterized by complex global issues such as resource scarcity, environmental degradation, and evolving communication systems. Their argument aligns with the broader discourse on competence as a driver of success in modern organizations. However, their study does not explicitly link team competence to church growth, leaving a contextual gap that the present study sought to address.

The significance of competence in team performance is emphasized by Oh and Choi (2020), who examined the correlation between emotional, managerial, and intellectual competence among project team members in Korea. Their findings affirm that the presence of these competencies leads to inevitable project success. Similarly, Yeoungdae et al. (2020) reinforce this perspective by asserting that project team members and managers should possess similar competencies for optimal performance. Both studies agree on the necessity of team competence in organizational success, particularly in business environments. However, their contextual focus on corporate projects and industrial systems engineering differs from the current study's emphasis on church growth, revealing a need to investigate whether similar competence dynamics apply in religious institutions.

Expanding on the relationship between competence and organizational performance, Jatmiko et al. (2021) studied the impact of competence and teamwork in West Nusa Tenggara's education and culture office. Their findings confirmed that competence positively influences an organization's ability to achieve its objectives. This aligns with Oh and Choi (2020) and Yeoungdae et al. (2020), who also found a direct correlation between competence and organizational success. However, unlike these studies, which focus on businesses, Jatmiko et al. (2021) explored competence in a government institution, differing from the present study in both methodology and sector. The current study, therefore, fills a contextual gap by applying competence theory within the framework of church leadership and growth.

Leadership competencies also play a crucial role in employee performance, as evidenced by Rukuni et al. (2019), who examined leadership skills and their impact on organizational performance in Tshwane, South Africa. Their study confirmed that leadership competence enhances employee effectiveness, supporting the conclusions of Oh and Choi (2020) and Jatmiko et al. (2021). However, Rukuni et al. (2019) employed a quantitative descriptive methodology focused on government employees, whereas the current study adopts a convergent parallel mixed-method approach targeting church leaders. This contextual difference underscores the necessity of investigating whether leadership competencies translate similarly to the church setting.

Further insights on leadership competencies are provided by Sayed and Edgar (2019), who studied leadership effectiveness in Al Nahda University, Egypt. Their qualitative approach, using semi-structured interviews, revealed that leadership competencies at individual, group, and organizational levels contribute to a stronger learning environment. While their findings align with previous studies that emphasize the importance of leadership competence, their focus on higher education institutions contrasts with the current study's religious context. This necessitates an examination of whether the same leadership competencies contribute to church growth.

Maina and Mang'ana (2022) explored the relationship between organizational skills and institutional performance within Kenya's Ministry of Labor and Social Protection. Their findings affirm that enhanced organizational competencies significantly improve institutional efficiency. This perspective aligns with previous studies that emphasize the role of competence in organizational success (Oh & Choi, 2020; Jatmiko et al., 2021). However, their focus on public institutions differs from the church environment, creating a contextual gap that the current study aims to bridge by examining team competence within Pentecostal churches.

While all the reviewed studies converge on the fundamental role of competence in enhancing organizational effectiveness, they diverge in terms of geographical settings, methodological approaches, and specific institutional contexts. Business-oriented

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studies (Oh & Choi, 2020; Yeoungdae et al., 2020) emphasize managerial and strategic competencies, while public-sector research (Rukuni et al., 2019; Maina & Mang'ana, 2022) highlights the administrative aspects of competence. The religious context remains largely unexplored, indicating the need to investigate whether similar competence principles apply to church growth.

Given the gaps in existing literature, this study sought to determine the correlation between team competence and church growth in Pentecostal churches in Kenya. Unlike previous studies that have primarily focused on business, government, and educational institutions, this study provides insights into how leadership competencies within a faith-based setting influence church expansion and sustainability. By addressing this gap, the study contributes to both theoretical and practical understandings of team competence in religious organizations.

III. METHOD

The research design for this study is a descriptive survey design using a correlational research approach, aligning with its quantitative nature. A descriptive survey design is appropriate for collecting data from a large population in a systematic manner, allowing for the generalization of findings (Mishra & Alok, 2022). The correlational research approach is used to examine the relationship between team competence and church growth without manipulating variables. This design enables the study to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between the two variables while maintaining objectivity and statistical rigor (Mazhar et al., 2021).

Understanding the nature and identity of Pentecostal churches is essential. In this study, the term "Pentecostal churches" refers to denominations that adhere to classical Pentecostal beliefs. Classical Pentecostalism is distinguished from Neo-Pentecostalism and the Charismatic movement by specific doctrinal and experiential elements. These include a personal encounter with God, Spirit baptism accompanied by speaking in tongues as initially demonstrated on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4), and a strong belief in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. These gifts encompass prophecy, faith healing, interpretation of tongues, receiving dreams and visions, words of wisdom, miracles, and exorcisms (casting out demons) (Garland & Doran, 2020; Melton, 2022; Nyabwari & Kagema, 2014). Additionally, classical Pentecostals emphasize expressive worship through joyful bodily movements, dancing, and praise, alongside conversion, adherence to moral principles, and a literal interpretation of the Bible (Melton, 2022; Hackett, 2022).

The study focused on five counties: Meru, Tharaka-Nithi, Laikipia, Embu, and Nyeri. This was because conducting research across all 47 counties would be impractical due to the geographical dispersion of the population, which could compromise the credibility of the findings ((Joshua, 2019; Parsitau & Mwaura, 2010). In addition, financial considerations played a role in selecting these counties, ensuring that the study remained feasible within the available resources (Bullen, 2022). The population distribution is shown in table 1.

Table 1 Population Matrix

Counties	Bishops	Reverends	Pastors	Totals
Meru	108	1125	3375	4608
Tharaka-Nithi	19	38	304	361
Laikipia	88	166	678	932
Embu	69	152	447	668
Nyeri	87	312	658	1057
Totals	371	1793	5462	7626

From this population, a total of 321 participants were successfully recruited for the study, Data collection was carried out using a structured questionnaire designed to gather quantitative data. The questionnaire comprised closed-ended questions and Likert-scale items (Edmondson, 2020; Jamieson, 2023), measuring various dimensions of team competence. The items addressed issues such as leadership competence, shared competencies, team development, survival, and the significant impact of team competence on Pentecostal church growth. Church growth was measured in terms of financial, physical, spiritual, and numerical perspectives. The questionnaire's structured format ensured uniformity in data collection and enabled efficient statistical analysis (Cheung, 2021).

For data analysis, the study employs descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, and frequency distributions) summarize data trends, while Pearson's correlation analysis determines the strength and direction of the relationship between team competence and church growth. Additionally, multiple regression analysis

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is conducted to assess the collective effect of different team competence variables on church growth. All analyses are performed using SPSS software, ensuring precision and efficiency in interpreting results. IBM SPSS Version 20.0 software was utilized for organizing and analyzing the collected data. This software is widely applied in various fields, including social sciences, business, health, environmental studies, and geography, for conducting descriptive statistical analysis (Oakes, 2017; Taherdoost, 2020). Using IBM SPSS Version 20.0 enabled the researcher to analyze data, test hypotheses, make informed predictions, identify trends, and derive accurate conclusions (Williams, 2022; Rahman & Mukhtadir, 2021).

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents rated statements on team competence using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 represented "Strongly Disagree," 2 indicated "Disagree," 3 denoted "No Comment," 4 signified "Agree," and 5 corresponded to "Strongly Agree." Table 2 presents a summary of the descriptive statistics, including the mean and standard deviation for the team competence variables.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics for Team Competence

Team competence items	Mean	Std. Deviation
Competence of team members has a positive and significant effect on the growth of Pentecostal churches.	4.47	.775
Competence of team members relate strongly to the growth of the Pentecostal churches.	4.46	.661
Bishops, reverends, and pastors require to have the necessary competencies to enable them lead the church to growth.	4.39	.738
The development and survival of any team work is dependent on the competence of the team members.	4.44	.752
There is need for team members to have the same competencies as the team leaders for achievement of common goals.	4.23	1.001
Team competence composite score	4.40	.785

The highest-rated statement, "The competence of team members has a significant and positive impact on the growth of Pentecostal churches," received a mean score of 4.47 (SD = 0.775), indicating strong consensus among respondents. Similarly, the assertion that "The competence of team members is closely linked to the growth of Pentecostal churches" followed with a mean of 4.46 (SD = 0.661). The statement "The sustainability and success of any team depend on the competence of its members" recorded a mean of 4.44 (SD = 0.752), further reinforcing the crucial role of team skills. Additionally, the item "Bishops, reverends, and pastors require relevant competencies to guide church growth" had a mean score of 4.39 (SD = 0.738), emphasizing the necessity of leadership abilities. Meanwhile, the idea that "Team members should possess the same competencies as team leaders to achieve shared goals" received a mean of 4.23 (SD = 1.001), reflecting moderate agreement. Overall, the team competence composite score of 4.40 (SD = 0.785) highlights the general recognition of its essential role in fostering church expansion.

These findings align with existing research, affirming the importance of team member competence in organizational development. The most highly rated item, "The competence of team members has a significant and positive impact on the growth of Pentecostal churches" (mean = 4.47, SD = 0.775), supports the conclusions of Zdonek et al. (2017) and Lotrecchiano et al. (2021), who emphasized that competence is fundamental to effective teamwork and institutional progress. Likewise, the mean score of 4.46 (SD = 0.661) for "The competence of team members is closely linked to the growth of Pentecostal churches" aligns with Schneider's (2019) perspective that competence enables individuals to meet organizational objectives successfully.

The statement "The sustainability and success of any team depend on the competence of its members," with a mean score of 4.44 (SD = 0.752), supports Lotrecchiano et al.'s (2021) argument that key competencies such as trust, integrity, and expertise are critical for team effectiveness. Strong agreement with the idea that "Bishops, reverends, and pastors require relevant competencies to guide church growth" (mean = 4.39, SD = 0.738) echoes the biblical account in Exodus 18:17-23, where Moses selected capable leaders to assist in governance.

The moderate agreement on "Team members should possess the same competencies as team leaders to achieve shared goals" (mean = 4.23, SD = 1.001) suggests that while common skills are beneficial, having diverse expertise within a team may also enhance performance. The overall composite score of 4.40 (SD = 0.785) further supports Zdonek et al.'s (2017) claim that an organization's achievements are significantly influenced by the competencies of its members, underscoring the vital role of team competence in driving the growth of Pentecostal churches.

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Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics for church growth dimensions, including financial, physical, spiritual, and numerical growth.

Table 3 Descriptive Analysis of Church Growth Dimensions

Church Growth Dimensions	Mean	Std. Dev
Financial Growth	4.14	0.977
Physical Growth	4.13	0.889
Spiritual Growth	4.00	1.000
Numerical Growth	3.67	1.230

The findings indicate that financial growth ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 0.977$) was rated highest, followed closely by physical growth ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 0.889$). Spiritual growth ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 1.000$) also received a relatively high mean rating, while numerical church growth ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 1.230$) had the lowest mean score. These results suggest that financial and physical growth are perceived as more prominent dimensions of church growth, whereas numerical spiritual growth are lagging behind.

The study tested the following hypothesis:

Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant relationship between team competence and the growth of Pentecostal churches in Kenya.

To assess this relationship, a Pearson correlation analysis was performed. The results are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4 Correlation between Team Competence and Church Growth

		Church Growth	Team Competence
Church Growth	Pearson Correlation	1	.279**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	321	321
Team Competence	Pearson Correlation	.279**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	321	321

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results revealed a moderate but statistically significant positive correlation between team competence and church growth ($r = .279$, $p < .01$). This suggests that higher team competence is associated with increased church growth in Pentecostal churches in Kenya. As a result, the null hypothesis (H_{02}), which stated that no significant relationship exists between team competence and church growth, was rejected. These findings support Adero and Odiyo (2020), who emphasized the importance of leadership skills and behaviors in driving high performance, especially in addressing contemporary challenges. Moreover, the results align with studies by Oh and Choi (2020) and Yeoungdae et al. (2020), which demonstrated that team competencies significantly influence project success and overall organizational effectiveness.

A simple linear regression analysis was performed to assess the impact of team competence on church growth. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5 Regression of church growth on team competence

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.279 ^a	.078	.075	.56187

a. Predictors: (Constant), Team Competence

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	8.505	1	8.505	26.941	.000 ^b
	Residual	100.392	318	.316		
	Total	108.897	319			

a. Dependent Variable: Church Growth

b. Predictors: (Constant), Team Competence

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Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	2.826	.248			11.418	.000
	Team Competence	.290	.056	.279		5.190	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Church Growth

The regression analysis revealed that team competence significantly predicts church growth, $F(1, 318) = 26.94$, $p < .01$, explaining 7.8% of the variance ($R^2 = .078$). The standardized beta coefficient for team competence was $\beta = .279$, $t(318) = 5.19$, $p < .01$, indicating a moderate positive influence on church growth. The resulting unstandardized regression equation was:

$$\text{Church Growth} = 2.826 + 0.290(\text{Team Competence})$$

This suggests that a one-unit increase in team competence corresponds to a 0.290-unit rise in church growth, assuming other factors remain unchanged. As a result, the null hypothesis (H02), which stated that there is no relationship between team competence and church growth, was rejected. These findings are consistent with the studies of Jatmiko et al. (2021) and Maina and Mang'ana (2022), who demonstrated that enhanced competencies positively influence organizational performance. This underscores the broader significance of team competence in fostering growth and effectiveness across different settings.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study lead to the conclusion that team competence is not just a contributing factor but a necessary condition for the sustained growth of Pentecostal churches in Kenya. The positive and significant relationship between team competence and church growth suggests that churches that invest in developing the skills, knowledge, and collaborative abilities of their teams are more likely to thrive. This implies that church leadership should prioritize capacity-building initiatives, structured mentorship programs, and continuous professional development for both clergy and church workers. Additionally, the study underscores the broader implication that organizational growth—whether in religious or secular contexts—relies heavily on the competence of those tasked with leading and executing its vision. Given that team competence only explained a portion of church growth, future research should explore other factors that might contribute to church expansion, such as spiritual engagement, community outreach, and technological adaptation. Ultimately, this study affirms that fostering a culture of competence within church leadership teams is a strategic necessity for achieving long-term growth and sustainability. Competent team members contribute to effective decision-making, problem-solving, and the execution of church activities, all of which are critical for church growth.

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