

## INFLUENCE OF CHARACTER ORIENTED LEADERSHIP ON EMPLOYEE JOB SATISFACTION IN PUBLIC DEVELOPMENT FINANCE INSTITUTIONS IN KENYA

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### ABSTRACT

This research study sought to determine how character-oriented leadership influences employee job satisfaction in public development finance institutions in Kenya. This study was guided by the following research questions: What is the influence of integrity on employee job satisfaction in public development finance institutions in Kenya? To what extent does humility influence employee job satisfaction in public development finance institutions in Kenya? How does servanthood influence employee job satisfaction in public development finance institutions in Kenya? The study employed positivism research philosophy and utilized cause and effect research design. A sample size of 326 was drawn using stratified and simple random sampling techniques. The study results demonstrated that integrity had a positive and statistically significant influence on employee job satisfaction ( $R^2 = .284$ ,  $\beta = .474$ ,  $t(293) = 10.785$ ,  $p = .000$ ). The study findings further revealed that humility positively and significantly influenced employee job satisfaction ( $R^2 = .304$ ,  $\beta = .459$ ,  $t(293) = 11.301$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Additionally, the findings demonstrated that servanthood had a positive and significant influence on employee job satisfaction ( $R^2 = .296$ ,  $\beta = .440$ ,  $t(293) = 11.109$ ,  $p = .000$ ). The study recommends that to achieve enhanced employee job satisfaction, the character of leaders should be embedded in leadership development initiatives. In addition, behavioral modeling training intervention should be adopted in public development institutions to improve the leaders' interpersonal skills.

**Key Words:** Character Oriented Leadership, Development Finance Institutions, Job Satisfaction

### INTRODUCTION

Employee job satisfaction is a key factor in the success of an organization and as such organizations should prioritize strategies that improve employee job satisfaction (Helmi & Abunar, 2021). Satisfied employees tend to be more productive, motivated, and committed which can lead to increased profits and reduced turnover costs (Abdelwahed, Soomro, & Shah, 2023). Riyanto, Endri and Herlisha (2021) submitted that job satisfaction is accepting the organization's goals, the willingness to work hard, and the intent to stay in an organization which leads to productivity and organizational success. Rohanai, Daud, Omar, Ismail, and Sulaiman (2020) believe that job satisfaction is important for service industry employees because it is only satisfied employees who can offer good service that yields customer satisfaction. Thus, it is not only customers who should be satisfied but also the employees of the development finance institutions.

Employee job satisfaction in the context of development finance institutions is a multifaceted psychological state encapsulating an individual's overall evaluation of their job experience,

comprising contentment, fulfillment, and a positive emotional state (Zargar, Sousan & Farmanesh, 2019). It reflects the extent to which employees feel satisfied with their job tasks and achievements, experiencing happiness and alignment with organizational values. This holistic assessment intertwines with constructs like organizational commitment where employees exhibit loyalty and attachment to their workplace. Additionally, job satisfaction influences absenteeism as satisfied employees are more likely to be present and engaged at work resulting in reduced unplanned absences. Moreover, it affects turnover intentions as satisfied employees are less inclined to seek alternative employment opportunities (Amah, 2021). Employee job satisfaction emerges as a vital determinant of both individual well-being and organizational effectiveness reflecting the interplay between personal fulfillment and commitment. and behavioral outcomes in the workplace (Chen & Guo, 2019).

Character-oriented leadership is a construct of servant leadership theory developed by Page and Wong (2000). It involves cultivating a servant attitude focusing on the leader's values of integrity, humility, and servanthood (Kumari, Abbas, & Ciola, 2022). Seijts and Milani (2022) argued that character-oriented leadership positively influences employee job satisfaction in organizations by fostering trust, integrity, and ethical behavior which contribute to a supportive and respectful work environment. Leaders' character traits such as honesty, accountability, and empathy enhance employees' sense of purpose and alignment with the organization's goals, thereby increasing job satisfaction (Pawar, Sudan, Satini, & Sunarsi, 2020). Employees find greater satisfaction when their leaders demonstrate strong moral character and a commitment to serving the community which leads to higher engagement, motivation, and fulfillment in their roles. This creates long term commitment of employees to quality improvement (Mcquade, Harrison & Tarbet, 2021). In this study, character-oriented leadership was measured through three constructs: integrity, humility, and servanthood.

In the United States Kim and Beehr (2019) examined the relationship between leader integrity and employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment and found that leader integrity had a positive effect on both job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Chan, Hsu, and Yang (2021) examined the relationship between leader integrity and employee job satisfaction in the hospitality industry in Taiwan and found that leader integrity had a positive effect on employee job satisfaction. These studies were conducted in countries with socio-economic conditions different from Kenya and the current study sought to address this contextual gap.

Triraharjo, Aima, and Sutawijaya (2019) in their study found that leader's humility had a positive effect on employee job satisfaction as leaders were willing to acknowledge their limitations and had genuine value of others' contributions and perspectives. Other studies with similar findings include that by Kim, Lee and Yoo (2021) in South Korea and Okoye & Ukwuoma (2020) in Nigeria. Majority of the studies in Kenya have focused on other leadership styles specifically transformational leadership (Budur, 2020; Gathuri, 2020; Kariuki, 2022). To fill this literature gap, this research study sought to determine how humility as a dimension of character-oriented leadership influences employee job satisfaction in public DFIs in Kenya.

According to Iqbal, Lodhi, and Raja (2019) study servanthood an aspect of character-oriented leadership is rooted in the idea that leadership is not about power but about service which enhances employee job satisfaction. The servant leaders see themselves as servants to their followers. Servanthood is a key ingredient in creating a positive and supportive work environment where everyone can thrive to reach their full potential (Chen & Guo, 2019). Erturk, Yalcin, and Elci (2021) and Adawiyah et al. (2021) sought to examine the relationship

between servant leadership and employee job satisfaction and found a positive relationship between servant leadership and employee job satisfaction. However, Derry and Yvonne (2021) study in Malawi on the influence of servanthood on job satisfaction in a women cooperative institution found that servanthood had a negative influence on job satisfaction and performance.

Studies conducted on character-oriented leadership and employee job satisfaction are characterized by contextual, conceptual, and methodological gaps that this study sought to address. Johnson (2024) examined how character-oriented leadership influences organizational climate of African American Women Leaders. The study established that character-oriented leadership greatly influences organizational climate. The study focused on organizational climate of African American Women Leaders in America but did not address employee job satisfaction hence conceptual and contextual gaps. Methodologically, the study focused on descriptive analysis and thus ignored the inferential analysis thereby limiting the study's ability to draw statistically significant conclusions, infer causality, or assess the reliability of the observed patterns beyond the specific sample or context under investigation. Mastur, Soim, Haryanti and Gufron (202) argued that the connection between character-oriented leadership and employee job satisfaction has been a subject of exploration revealing a complex significant relationship. Research suggests that employees who work under leaders characterized by strong moral principles experience higher levels of job satisfaction due to the alignment of their own values with the leadership style (Tran, 2021).

In a study by Wang, Lu, and Li (2020) to investigate the effect of leader integrity on employee job satisfaction and turnover intention in Chinese organizations and found that leader integrity had a significant positive effect on employee job satisfaction and a significant negative effect on turnover intention. A study by Bae and Yoon (2020) aimed to examine the mediating effect of trust in leader and the moderating effect of leader member exchange on the relationship between leader integrity and employee job satisfaction in South Korea and found that leader integrity had a significant positive effect on employee job satisfaction which was partially mediated by trust in leaders.

The studies however present contextual gaps as they were conducted in United States of America, China and South Korea with social and economic settings different from Kenya where the current study was conducted. Accordingly, due to the differences in socio-economic and political environment and the public sector policies used in Kenya, the findings of these studies might not be applicable to the Kenyan context. Further, while these studies were conducted in United States of America, South Korea, and China scholars advance that carrying out similar research based on other national and regional contexts would contribute to the key area of research and add knowledge especially in nonwestern setting (Genç 2020). Similarly, Okeke (2019) posited that most research on leadership styles has focused on large organizations and there is limited research regarding the effect of leadership in public development finance institutions.

This study was justified by the need to address existing knowledge and research gaps regarding the relationship between leadership virtues and employee job satisfaction within public development finance institutions in Kenya. Specifically, the study sought to determine the influence of integrity on employee job satisfaction, to examine the extent to which humility affects employee job satisfaction, and to assess how servanthood influences employee job satisfaction in public development finance institutions in Kenya.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed the positivism research philosophy because it allows for hypothesis testing using quantitative data (Wynn & Borrie, 2020). The research study employed cause-and-effect research design. The target population was the 1738 employees working within the positions of middle and operational level management in the seven public development finance institutions in Kenya. The research applied stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Yamane (1967) sample size formula was employed to determine the sample size, which resulted in a sample size of 326. This research study used primary data. A semi structured questionnaire was used to gather primary data. A five point Likert scale where 1 was Strongly Disagree, 2 was Disagree, 3 was Neutral, 4 was Agree and 5 was Strongly Agree and open ended questions were used. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 29) software was employed to analyze quantitative data. Descriptive statistics included percentages, means and standard deviation. Pearson correlation coefficient and linear regression analysis were the inferential statistics used.

## RESULTS

The results included the research participants' demographics, the descriptive findings of character-oriented leadership dimensions and employee job satisfaction. The response rate was 90.5%. This study being quantitative in nature employed techniques that converted data collected to numerical form before subjecting them to statistical analysis. Quantitative analysis techniques included tables, descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, linear regression analysis and these enabled presentation, description and assessment of relationships. As part of the general information, the findings indicated that 29.9% of the participants had served in their development finance institution for over 15 years, while 26.1% indicated having served for 11-15 years. In addition, most of the middle level managers in public development finance institutions (55.3%) had an undergraduate degree while 40.7% had a master's degree. The respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement with various statements relating to character oriented leadership and employee job satisfaction in public development finance institutions in Kenya. The responses were based on a 5-point Likert scale as follows: 1-strongly disagree; 2-disagree; 3-neutral; 4-agree; 5-strongly agree. The mean and standard deviation were used to interpret the findings where a mean value of 1.0-1.4 = strongly disagree; 1.5-2.4 =disagree; 2.5-3.4 =neutral; 3.5-4.4= agree and 4.5-5.0= strongly agree. Standard deviation greater than 2 was considered large meaning responses were widely spread out and not tightly clustered around the mean. In other words, there was a lot of variability in the responses, which would suggest that participants had different interpretations or perceptions of the questions being asked.

**Table 1 : Mean and Standard Deviation for Character-oriented Leadership Employee Job Satisfaction**

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<b>Character-Oriented Leadership</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
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In our organization leaders are trustworthy	3.78	1.052
In our organization leaders are reliable	3.74	1.188
In our organization leaders are transparent even in the face of challenges	3.87	1.050
In our organization leaders create a sense of inclusivity	3.75	1.011
In our organization employees have confidence in their leaders' decision-making abilities	3.82	0.982
In our organization leaders encourage open communication	3.98	1.016
In our organization leaders encourage idea sharing	3.89	0.925
In our organization leaders are empathetic	3.93	0.922
In our organization leaders are open to learning from others	4.01	0.822
My leader acknowledges and appreciates the contributions of others	4.12	0.823
In our organization leaders address the concerns of employees	3.78	1.020
In our organization leaders support the growth of the employees	3.77	0.870
In our organization leaders prioritize the well-being of employees	3.87	0.928
In our organization leaders are often not after rewards for supporting others in their roles	3.78	1.032
In our organization leaders empower employees to achieve their goals	3.87	1.012

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### **Correlation Analysis**

A correlation analysis was carried out to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between character-oriented leadership constructs (humility, integrity and servanthood) and employee job satisfaction.

**Table 2: Correlation Analysis Between Character Oriented Leadership and Employee Job Satisfaction**

			<b>Integ- rity</b>	<b>Humil- ity</b>	<b>Servant- hood</b>	<b>Job Satisfac- tion</b>
Integrity	Pearson	Correla- tion	1			
		Sig. (2-tailed)				
		N	295			
Humility	Pearson	Correla- tion	.962**	1		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
		N	295	295		
Servanthood	Pearson	Correla- tion	.811**	.858**	1	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
		N	295	295	295	
Job Satisfac- tion	Pearson	Correla- tion	.762**	.768**	.544**	1
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
		N	295	295	295	295

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

The results presented in Table 1 indicated that there exists a strong relationship between integrity ( $r = 0.762$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ ) humility ( $r = 0.768$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ ) servanthood ( $r = 0.544$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ ) and employee job satisfaction in public development finance institutions in Kenya.

**Regression Analysis**

Preliminary tests for assumptions of regression were first conducted before fitting the regression model for character-oriented leadership dimensions. The preliminary tests included normality test, linearity test, and homoscedasticity.

**Regression Analysis of Character Oriented Leadership Dimensions and Employee job Satisfaction**

The study used linear regression analysis to determine the influence of character-oriented leadership dimensions on employee job satisfaction

**Regression Model Summary for Integrity and Employee Job Satisfaction**

The regression model summary for integrity and employee job satisfaction provided key statistics to assess how well a model fits the data and the significance of individual predictors.

**Table 3: Model Summary for Linear Relationship Between Integrity and Employee Job Satisfaction**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.533 <sup>a</sup>	.284	.282	.6964

a. Predictors: (Constant), Integrity

The R-squared between integrity and employee job satisfaction in public development finance institutions in Kenya was 0.284. This indicates that integrity could explain 28.4% of employee job satisfaction in public development finance institutions in Kenya.

**Regression Coefficient for Integrity and Employee Job Satisfaction**

The regression coefficient for integrity and employee job satisfaction represented the strength and direction of the relationship between a predictor variable (integrity) and a response variable (employee job satisfaction) in a regression model.

**Table 4: Regression Coefficients for Integrity and Employee Job Satisfaction**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Coefficients Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.047	.169		12.111	.000
	Integrity	.474	.044	.533	10.785	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Job Satisfaction

The regression coefficient presented in Table 3 indicates that integrity statistically and significantly influences employee job satisfaction in Kenya's public development finance institutions satisfaction ( $\beta = .474$ ,  $t(293) = 10.785$ ,  $p = .000$ ).

**Regression Model Summary for Humility and Employee Job Satisfaction**

The regression model summary for humility and employee job satisfaction provided key statistics to assess how well a model fits the data and the significance of individual predictors.

**Table 5: Model Summary for Linear Relationship Between Humility and Employee Job Satisfaction**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.551 <sup>a</sup>	.304	.301	.6869

a. Predictors: (Constant), Humility

The R-squared between humility and employee job satisfaction in public development finance institutions in Kenya was 0.304. This indicates that humility could explain 30.4% of employee job satisfaction in public development finance institutions in Kenya.

**Regression Coefficient for Humility and Employee Job Satisfaction**

The regression coefficient for integrity and employee job satisfaction represented the strength and direction of the relationship between a predictor variable (humility) and a response variable (employee job satisfaction) in a regression model.

**Table 6: Regression Coefficients for Humility and Employee Job Satisfaction**

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Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1 (Constant)	2.041	.162		12.585	.000
Humility	.459	.041	.551	11.301	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Job Satisfaction

The regression coefficient presented in Table 5 indicate that humility statistically and significantly influence employee job satisfaction in Kenya's public development finance institutions satisfaction ( $\beta = .459$ ,  $t(293) = 11.301$ ,  $p=0.000$ ).

**Regression Model Summary for Servanthood and Employee Job Satisfaction**

The regression model summary for servanthood and employee job satisfaction provided key statistics to assess how well a model fits the data and the significance of individual predictors.

**Table 7: Model Summary for Linear Relationship Between Servanthood and Employee Job Satisfaction**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.544 <sup>a</sup>	.296	.294	.6904

a. Predictors: (Constant), Servanthood

The R-squared between servanthood and employee job satisfaction in public development finance institutions in Kenya was 0.296 This indicate that servanthood could explain 29.6% of employee job satisfaction in public development finance institutions in Kenya.

**Regression Coefficient for Servanthood and Employee Job Satisfaction**

The regression coefficient for servanthood and employee job satisfaction represented the strength and direction of the relationship between a predictor variable (servanthood) and a response variable (employee job satisfaction) in a regression model.

**Table 8: Regression Coefficients for Servanthood and Employee Job Satisfaction**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1 (Constant)	2.166	.154		14.068	.000
Servanthood	.440	.040	.544	11.109	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Job Satisfaction

The regression coefficient presented in Table 7 indicate that servanthood statistically and significantly influences employee job satisfaction in Kenya's public development finance institutions satisfaction ( $\beta = .440$ ,  $t(293) = 11.109$ ,  $p=.000$ ).

**Summary of Findings**

This research was conducted to examine the influence of character-oriented leadership on employee job satisfaction in public development finance institutions in Kenya. The study's independent variable was character-oriented leadership while the dependent variable was employee job satisfaction. To identify how the independent variable influenced the dependent

variable the researcher used a theoretical framework fronted by Page & Wong (2000). The study adopted a positivism research philosophy as it was mostly quantitative. The study utilized cause and effect research design. Stratified simple random sampling technique was used to select 326 middle and operational level managers from the public DFI's in Kenya. The study employed a semi-structured questionnaire to collect appropriate data. Yamane's Formula was employed to determine this research study's sample size. The quantitative data in this research study was analyzed using the SPSS statistical software to obtain both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics in this research study included percentages and measures of central tendency (mean). Pearson correlation coefficient, regression analysis, and hypothesis testing were used to conduct inferential data analysis

The frequency distribution results supported the existence of a positive relationship between character-oriented leadership dimensions and employee job satisfaction. This was supported by higher frequencies on the agreement scale for the three constructs of character-oriented leadership. Correlation analysis results revealed that integrity ( $r = 0.762$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ ), humility ( $r = 0.768$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ ) and servanthood ( $r = 0.544$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ ) had positive association with employee job satisfaction in public development institutions in Kenya. The regression model summary findings indicated that integrity explained 28.4% of the variability in employee job satisfaction in Kenya's public development finance institutions ( $R^2 = .284$ ), while humility explained 30.4% ( $R^2 = .304$ ) of the variability and servanthood explained 29.6% ( $R^2 = .296$ ) of the variability in employee job satisfaction in Kenya's public development finance institutions. The regression analysis results from regression coefficients revealed that integrity ( $\beta = 0.474$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ ) had a positive and statistically significant influence on employee job satisfaction in public development finance institutions in Kenya. Humility ( $\beta = 0.459$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ ) and servanthood ( $\beta = 0.440$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ ) had a positive and statistically significant influence on employee job satisfaction in public development finance institutions in Kenya. The study results demonstrated that integrity had a positive and statistically significant influence on employee job satisfaction ( $\beta = .474$ ,  $t(293) = 10.785$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Regression analysis results indicated that humility positively and significantly influenced employee job satisfaction ( $\beta = .459$ ,  $t(293) = 11.301$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Further, the findings demonstrated that servanthood had a positive and significant influence on employee job satisfaction ( $\beta = .440$ ,  $t(293) = 11.109$ ,  $p = .000$ ).

## DISCUSSION

This study developed a model for predicting how character-oriented leadership dimensions influenced employee job satisfaction in public development finance institutions in Kenya. This research study found that integrity had a positive and statistically significant influence on employee job satisfaction in public development finance institutions in Kenya. These findings are supported by Wang et. al (2020) who conducted a study on the banking sector in Pakistan and found a positive relationship between leader integrity and employee job satisfaction, suggesting that employees who perceive their leaders as trustworthy are more likely to report higher satisfaction levels.

The findings of this study also found that humility positively and significantly influenced employee job satisfaction in public development institutions in Kenya. These results are backed by research by Sun and Cai (2021) who determined that humble leaders positively and significantly influence employee job satisfaction. These findings also concur with the observation of Kim et. al (2021) who established that humility positively influenced employee

job satisfaction in organizations with high leader-member exchange quality. Similarly, these research findings are in line with the study by Zou, Zhu, and Fan (2021) who observed that leader humility positively and significantly influences employee job satisfaction through promoting creativity particularly when employees feel psychologically safe in the workplace. However, Bharanitharan, Lowe, Bahmannia, Chen, and Cui (2023) believed that there are potentially detrimental effects of leader humility on follower behaviors and some of the negative consequences of humble behaviors is the leader being perceived as hypocritical. Jackson (2021) also argued that humble leaders may have moral hypocrisy as leaders may believe in a good norm for all and display their commitment to the spirit of the common good, but they do not contribute significantly to the common good.

The findings of this study also found that servanthood positively and significantly influenced employee job satisfaction in public development institutions in Kenya. These findings are supported by Erturk et al. (2021) who demonstrated that servanthood had a positive and significant influence on employee job satisfaction. These study findings also concur with Adawiyah, Fitria, and Kurniawan (2021) who established that servanthood had a positive and significant influence on employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment. A study by Rabiul, Shamsudin, Yean, and Patwary (2023) also established that servanthood had a positive association with employee job satisfaction by creating a supportive environment where employees' growth and wellbeing are at the forefront. These research findings concur with Fatima, Abbas, and Hassan (2023) who determined that servanthood fosters a sense of purpose and fulfillment among employees as they understand the broader effect of their work on the institution's mission aligning with the development goals of the organization.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that adopting the character-oriented leadership style enhances employee job satisfaction in public development finance institutions. That integrity positively and significantly influenced employee job satisfaction in public development finance institutions. In addition, humility positively and significantly influenced employee job satisfaction in public development finance institutions. Further, it is concluded that servanthood positively and significantly influenced employee job satisfaction in public development finance institutions. The study concludes that servant leaders should be caring, empathetic, trustworthy and be willing to learn from others to improve job satisfaction of employees.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

To improve employee job satisfaction development finance institutions should ensure character-oriented leadership style encompassing integrity, humility, and servanthood are embedded in leadership development programs. In addition, behavioral modeling training intervention should be adopted in development finance institutions to improve the leaders' interpersonal skills. These measures will boost productivity, lower turnover, and improve customer satisfaction.

## **XI. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

This research study was conducted among public development finance institutions in Kenya and hence its findings may not be generalizable among other development finance institutions in Kenya. Therefore, the present study recommends further research on character-oriented leadership style and employee job satisfaction among other development finance institutions in Kenya. In addition, further study could also be conducted among state corporations, ministries, departments and government agencies.

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