
Influence of Regulating Distress on Organizational Effectiveness of Faith-Based Organizations in Kenya

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to examine the influence of adaptive leadership on organizational effectiveness of Faith-based organizations (FBOs) in Kenya. The specific objective was to examine the influence of regulating distress on the organizational effectiveness of FBOs in Kenya. The null hypothesis assumed regulating distress has no significant influence on the organizational effectiveness of FBOs in Kenya. The study was anchored on adaptive leadership theory, and guided by positivism philosophy. A descriptive correlational design was adopted, with a target population of 345 top level executives from FBOs. A sample of 185 executives was determined using Yamane's (1967) formulae, and primary data collected from them with a response rate of 89.7%. Quantitative data were collected using an electronic questionnaire, analysed using descriptive statistics, and inferential statistics that included correlation, and regression analysis. Correlation coefficient (R) between regulating distress and organizational effectiveness was 0.695, indicating a moderate to strong positive relationship. Regression analysis had a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.483, suggesting that approximately 48.3% of the variation in organizational effectiveness can be explained by regulating distress. The overall regression model was statistically significant ($F(1,164) = 153.518, p < 0.05$). The positive coefficient indicates that as leaders enhance their ability to regulate distress by providing clear direction, maintaining distress at optimal levels, and creating a supportive environment, the effectiveness of their organizations increases correspondingly. The results led to the rejection of the null hypothesis. The study concluded that regulation of distress is an adaptive foundational determinant of organisational effectiveness within Kenyan FBOs. As such, the study recommended that FBOs should institutionalize leadership capacity-building programs that focus on regulating distress including setting clear goals, conflict management, and a supportive environment. At the policy level, policy makers within the FBO sector should integrate such frameworks into their human resource policies.

Key Words

Faith-Based Organizations, Organizational Effectiveness, Adaptive Leadership, Regulating Distress,

Introduction

The adaptive leadership framework is acknowledged for its effectiveness in navigating organizational challenges during times of transition (Northouse, 2021). Empirical studies globally suggest that adaptive leadership enhances organizational effectiveness. However, much of this evidence is rooted in secular, corporate environments, and different contexts from that of FBOs in Kenya. A study conducted within a machine-building company in North Carolina, demonstrated that adaptive leadership facets positively influenced effectiveness within the industry (Lannes, 2021). Contemporary organizations grapple with adaptive challenges that precipitate crises, necessitating a compelling call for change. This change process introduces some level of ambiguity and stress within the workforce. Adaptive leaders are tasked with managing this distress, ensuring it remains at optimal levels (Northouse, 2021). Safitri and Saputra (2023) argued that organizational effectiveness depends on how conflicts are managed, among other factors. In Puerto Rico, a study scrutinized how leaders with adaptive attributes could steer their organizations towards success in crisis scenarios, seeking to define a bespoke leadership profile tailored to adaptive leaders in times of crisis (Hernandez-Santiago & Perez-Rivera, 2022). Distinctive traits vital for adaptive leaders, including flexibility, expeditious decision-making, were evident in over 50% of the surveyed organizations. Their adaptive capacity played an indispensable role in enabling them to navigate and prosper in the face of formidable challenges (Heifetz et al., 2009). While the Puerto Rican study was rigorous, it was focused on the food industries where the primary drivers of effectiveness are often linked to market survival and commercial expeditiousness. In Kosovo, Shabani, et al. (2022) established that regulating distress was positively correlated with organizational effectiveness in both private and public institutions.

The research by John-Eke and Akintokunbo (2020) and Siddiqua et al. (2022) provides a vital theoretical bridge between conflict management and organisational effectiveness, shifting the perception of conflict from a disruptive force to a strategic asset. By highlighting that functional conflict can stimulate participation and healthy competition, these studies align with the adaptive leadership tenet of regulating distress where the goal is not to eliminate tension, but to harness it for institutional growth. This evidence from the Nigerian corporate sector and the Bangladeshi banking industry underscores that conflict, when managed effectively, serves as a catalyst for bridging communication gaps and fortifying teamwork. However, applying these findings to Kenyan FBOs requires a contextual analysis. In secular banking and corporate environments, healthy competition is often driven by market performance and individual incentives (Siddiqua et al., 2022). Another study examining the impact of conflict management on organizational performance in Somalia, established that effective conflict management strategies create a conducive environment for achieving organizational goals (Mohamed, et al., 2024). In Kenya, a study conducted by M'mbwanga et al. (2021) examined the impact of conflict management strategies on the performance of Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) in Nairobi, and concluded that conflict management strategies enhanced performance in MFIs. However, the MFIs are profit-making entities, different from FBO.

A holding environment withing the adaptive leadership is a supportive framework within an organization that alleviates anxiety and uncertainty during times of change thereby promoting employee engagement and trust (Northouse, 2021). Such an environment offers safety, support, and stability, enabling employees to navigate complex processes during times of change (Heifetz et al., 2009). Additionally, a supportive culture is key to promoting positive interpersonal relationships within the workforce (Meng & Berger, 2019). The research by

Rasool et al. (2021) in the context of Chinese SMEs demonstrated that toxic work environments actively erode productivity and well-being. The study underscored the necessity of the holding environment described by Heifetz et al. (2009). The finding that organizational support fostered a sense of belonging and mitigating negativity, aligns with the adaptive leadership requirement to provide a supportive framework where employees can process the distress that comes as a result of systemic change without becoming overwhelmed. In India, Tripathi and Kalia (2024) established that supportive work environment significantly enhanced innovation and overall organizational effectiveness, enabling the organizations achieve their goals and proper utilization of resources. However, the study's focus was solely on the IT sector in India, potentially limiting the findings' applicability to other sectors and contexts.

Northouse (2021) asserts that During times of change, employees may feel lost in the change process and therefore need leadership direction as to where the organization is going. Setting clear goals consistent with the organization's vision and mission provides them with the needed direction, while enabling them to stay focused towards achievement of the set goals. A study in China established that integrating SDGs within a supportive organizational climate promotes employee well-being, which positively affects organizational processes, strategic execution, and goal achievement (Xie & Lin, 2023). Xie and Lin (2023) argued that embedding SDGs into corporate policies influences decision-making and optimizes resource utilization and thereby improving organizational effectiveness. A descriptive study in Nigeria found that establishing a strategic direction substantially influences FBO sustainability, boosting operational effectiveness and longevity. Strategic planning enabled leaders to anticipate obstacles, recognize opportunities, and adapt to evolving circumstances, thus ensuring organizational effectiveness (Dada et al., 2021). This underscores the importance of strategy direction setting in overcoming challenges and achieving organizational objectives. Goal setting was found to help employees focus on the important aspects of their work during times of change, and reduce the negative effects or distress that come with change. This allows the organization to continually focus on its mission through accomplishment of its goals and objectives.

Faith-based organizations (FBOs) are non-governmental organizations that are influenced by religious faith and motivated by spiritual values (Vijay et al., 2008). FBOs have their origin in the 19th century, with the arrival of Christian missionaries and the Coastal establishment of Islam, where they evolved from purely evangelical groups into providers of education, healthcare, and social development (Ochanda, 2012). FBOs fall under different categories such as societies, trusts, public benefit organizations, or non-governmental organizations. In the Kenyan context, they are classified based on the sector of operation such as healthcare, education, children etc. They are also classified based on geographical scope such as local or international FBOs, and finally, under the umbrella or affiliation networks such as Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishop (KCCB), National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) etc (FNJ & Associates, 2026).

FBOs function as integral components of the sociocultural fabric, providing essential spiritual guidance and social safety nets for marginalised populations. Consequently, international development agencies increasingly conceptualise these organisations as indispensable partners for the accelerated attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, increasingly integrating them into the high-level decision-making and planning frameworks of global health and developmental institutions (Boro et al., 2023). Their role as primary agents of community transformation was particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, where

they mitigated socioeconomic disruptions through food distribution and financial interventions (Boro et al., 2023). Furthermore, the strategic significance of FBOs in global health security was underscored by their substantive contributions to managing Ebola outbreaks across West Africa and the Democratic Republic of Congo (Marshall, et al., 2020). In the Kenyan context, FBOs occupy a pivotal position across a broad spectrum of developmental sectors, ranging from environmental resilience and drought response to human rights advocacy and healthcare (Sahal, et al., 2022; Wambugu, 2022). Due to their broad functions, FBOs, whether local or international, collaborate with stakeholders such as donors who fund their work, other FBOs, communities who benefit from their services, national governments, donors, and other development agencies such as World Health organizations, USAID, among others.

Despite the vital role that they play, FBOs face multiple challenges that hinder their sustainability and effectiveness, including increased competition for resources, reliance on donor funding, evolving expectations for accountability (Boro, et al., 2023), conflicting stakeholder interests (Wiltshire, et al., 2018), and unanticipated operational costs (Princes & Said, 2022). These issues result in funding gaps that strain programs and service delivery (Dada, et al., 2021; Thampi, 2023; Bore & Macharia, 2022). Many FBOs in the health sector operate in isolation without strong partnerships (Boro et al., 2023), and despite managing 40% of Africa's healthcare services (WHO, 2008), they often lack adequate funding and equipment, particularly during crises like COVID-19 (Vilakati, et al., 2020). Operational capacity and religiosity affect collaboration, with only well-resourced FBOs forming effective partnerships (Fu, et al., 2020), while misunderstandings of FBO missions hinder cooperation with other sectors (Ellis & Fitzgerald, 2022).

In Kenya, leadership challenges, institutional weaknesses, governance gaps, and exclusion continue to obstruct FBO efforts (Wambugu, 2022), alongside financial vulnerability, low internal controls, and the demands of a volatile global context intensified by the challenges such as floods, drought, and outbreak of diseases (Iswan & Kihara, 2022; Yakovleva, 2022). These operational, and contextual pressures generate organizational distress that negatively affects the overall effectiveness, and call for leadership approaches that can regulate distress, maintain calm, and provide direction amid challenges.

Adaptive leadership is needed during such volatile times when FBOs are facing these adaptive challenges (Northouse, 2021). While studies show positive associations between regulating distress and organizational effectiveness (Lannes, 2021), and highlight leadership adaptability in crisis management (Hernandez-Santiago & Perez-Rivera, 2022), these findings have not been contextualized to Kenyan FBOs. Leadership in this sector operates under unique pressures, resource constraints, stakeholder diversity, and mission-driven demands, that intensify organizational distress, yet empirical evidence on how distress regulation influences effectiveness remains scarce (Iswan & Kihara, 2022; Wambugu, 2022). Recent Global research on FBOs has examined topics such as strategic partnerships for promoting COVID-19 vaccinations in India (Soni et al., 2023), leadership development within American FBOs (Jun & Aronson, 2021), and transcendental rewards in Indonesia (Faletahan & van Burg, 2022). In Africa, studies have explored FBO health literacy in Ghana (Tutu, et al., 2023), FBO drought response in Kenya (Sahal, et al., 2022), and internal resources' influence on Kenyan faith-based non-profits (Iswan & Kihara, 2022). The research employed semi-structured interviews (Tutu et al., 2023) and theoretical frameworks such as the theory of justice, ecological perspectives, and the theory of obligation (Sahal, et al., 2022). In Kenya, adaptive leadership was linked to insurance company performance, though the study prioritized financial metrics over

organizational effectiveness (Wamburu, et al., 2022). While these studies affirm the positive relationship of adaptive leadership and organizational effectiveness, their findings remain largely inapplicable to FBOs due to differences in sectoral and regional contexts. This therefore introduces a methodological, contextual, and theoretical gap, that the current research addresses by using quantitative research method, and focuses on adaptive leadership theory.

Objective of the study

The purpose of the research is to examine how regulating distress influence organizational effectiveness of FBOs in Kenya.

Adaptive leadership represents a pragmatic approach to resolving challenges, guiding leaders in discerning and prioritizing crucial aspects of business operations while neglecting non-essential elements (Northouse, 2021). Regulating distress is an adaptive leadership behaviour where leaders monitor their employees to discern the necessity for change without succumbing to overwhelming distress. Adaptive challenges necessitate change, which inherently induces a certain level of distress. An adaptive leader must monitor followers' stress levels and ensure that they remain within productive bounds or regulate them accordingly. Leaders can regulate distress and maintain its productivity by establishing a supportive or a holding environment, offering direction, and conflict management.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework in Figure 1 suggests a direct causal relationship between regulating distress as the independent variable (X), and organizational effectiveness as the dependent variable (Y). Regulating Distress (X), was measured through three indicators; conflict management, holding environment, and providing direction through setting goals. The 5-point Likert scale questionnaire measured the leaders' ability to manage conflicts and maintain it at an optimal level, create a holding environment where employees can express themselves without fear of reprisal, and finally the leaders' ability to provide direction through setting clear goals. The direct link to the depended variable suggests that as leaders master these specific behaviours, there is a corresponding and measurable improvement in the organisational effectiveness (Y) of Kenyan FBOs. Organizational effectiveness was operationalised through three key outcomes; the successful accomplishment of goals, the strategic acquisition of resources, and the optimisation of internal processes.

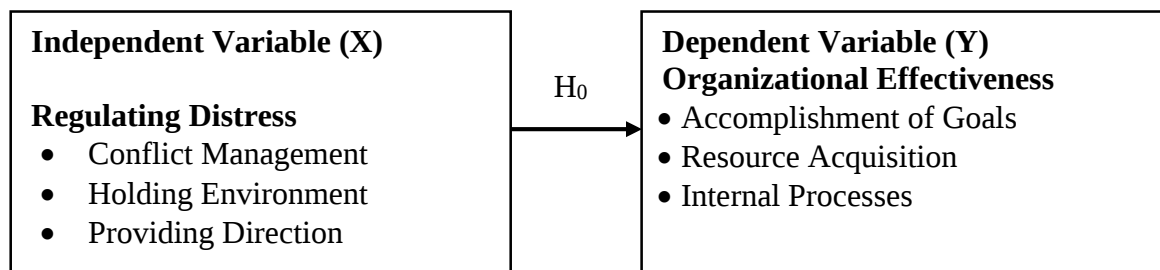


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

These assumptions are informed by the theoretical underpinnings of adaptive leadership theory, as well as the available empirical review. In India, Tripathi and Kalia (2024) investigated the influence of a supportive work environment on organizational performance, and found that a

supportive work environment significantly enhanced organizational overall performance. A different study in Nigeria examined leadership qualities impacting the sustainability of FBOs (Dada et al., 2021), and highlighted the central role of leadership in strategic decision-making, underscoring that effective decision making and setting goals is crucial for overcoming challenges and achieving organizational objectives as it continually allows the organisation to focus on its mission. Here in Kenya, M'mbwanga et al. (2021) examined the impact of conflict management strategies on the performance of Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) in Nairobi, and established that conflict management strategies enhance performance in the MFIs. These studies however were carried out either in a context different from that of FBOs, or outside of the Kenyan context which make it a challenge to generalise the findings.

Research Methodology

The quantitative study was guided by positivism research philosophy, that allowed the researcher to work with observable social realities to produce law-like generalizations (Park et al., 2020). Positivists believe that credible and meaningful data can only be derived from observable and measurable phenomena, aiming to describe phenomena that can be directly observed and objectively measured (Johannesson and Perjons (2021). The study achieved this by utilising a descriptive correlational research design to collect and analyze data by use of scientific methods.

The study targeted a population of 345 top-level executives from 69 FBO, from which a sample of 185 managers was drawn using Yamane's (1967) formula. The list of FBOs was derived through a systematic screening process applied to the NGO Coordination Board's database of active organizations (NGOs Coordination Board, 2024). The screening involved evaluating organizational names for indicators of a religious or faith-based identity. Following the completion of this process, 69 FBOs were identified for inclusion in the sampling frame. Since the FBOs are involved in different sectors such as health, education, children, etc a stratified sampling was used to pick the 69 to ensure representation of each different sector. The study utilised descriptive research design, therefore stratified and probability sampling designs were appropriate for generalization of results, as well as for cost effectiveness, because studying an entire population would be costly (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Drawing from standard organizational structures in the development sector, it was estimated that each FBO had approximately five (5) top-level managers, including heads of departments such as human resources, finance, operations, resource development, and program management. This resulted in a defined study population of 345 top-level executives. For FBOs that had fewer than 5 executives, the available number of managers were targeted to ensure total representation of the leadership unit. Top level executives are of particular interest to the study given their direct involvement in strategic planning, program oversight, and decision-making. They also play a central role in implementing adaptive leadership practices, managing resource allocation, and balancing the organization's faith-based mission with operational demands in complex and dynamic environments.

Data collection and procedures

Primary data were collected via google forms using a custom-designed questionnaire on a 5-point Likert scale. A few open ended questions were included to enrich the study. To increase the response rate, a number of printed questionnaires were delivered in person to the

respondents. A pilot study was done to establish the appropriateness of the instrument (Islam et al., 2022). The pilot study involved 20 respondents, approximately 10% of the sample size. To evaluate the reliability of the study constructs, Cronbach's alpha (α) and standardized alpha coefficients were calculated using the data from the pilot study. The study constructs demonstrated satisfactory to excellent reliability, with Cronbach's alpha value ($\alpha = 0.959$) for regulating distress (X) across 7 items (average inter-item correlation $\alpha = 0.769$), and ($\alpha = 0.923$) for organizational effectiveness (Y) with 24 items, (average inter-item correlation ($\alpha = 0.334$)).

Data Analysis

Data preparation included cleaning, transforming, and organizing the raw data into a structured format that could effectively be used for analysis (Alvaro et al., 2023). Responses were recorded in excel sheets, and coding was done for the qualitative responses. Numerical values were assigned to responses, streamlining the preparation for statistical analysis (Engler, et al., 2021). This ensured that each row in the data corresponded to an individual response, while each column reflected a specific variable or question (Borrouh et al., 2023). Google Forms offered user-friendly interfaces and efficient data collection capabilities, allowing the researcher to focus on analysis rather than managing data entry (Kuenzi, 2023). Microsoft Excel allowed for seamless data export in formats such as comma separated format (CSV), making the transfer process to SPSS smooth and efficient.

Descriptive statistics that included mean, and standard deviation were used to analyse the demographic data, (Lee & Landers, 2022). Diagnostic tests were carried out to determine whether the data met the assumptions of normality, linearity, and multicollinearity (Petchey et al., 2021). Normality test was done using Shapiro Wilk test, to establish if the data was normally distributed. To establish whether there was a linear relationship among the variables, linearity test was done using scatter plot. Multicollinearity test was carried out using Inflation Factor and Tolerance values, to ensure that the independent variables were not identical, and that each predictor was providing unique information (Guetterman, 2019). These diagnostic checks ensured that the dataset was appropriate for parametric analysis and that subsequent inferential results would be statistically valid. Inferential statistics included correlation analysis to test the strength and direction of the relationship between the two quantitative variables (Janse, et al., 2021). Simple regression analysis was used to test the influence of regulating distress on organizational effectiveness, and the null hypothesis (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020).

Ethical consideration

Ethical consideration included getting permission from the USIU-Africa Institutional Ethics and Review Committee (Approval No. USIU-A/ISERC/US838-2025), to confirm the university's approval for the research, and that it would be carried out in line with the university's guidelines and ethical standards. In addition, the researcher got approval from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), Licence No: NACOSTI/P/25/4175833, a confirmation that the research would adhere to the Science and Technology Act in Kenya. All participants were supplied with information on the purpose of the research, and their consent sought to participate voluntarily. To protect the privacy of the respondents, the questionnaire was developed with an optional provision for names, and so participants would choose to include or leave out their names and email addresses (Ajemba & Arene, 2022). Files were protected using passwords, and encryption when sending information through the internet to ensure that the information given was confidential and only accessed by the researcher for purposes of analysis (Dubey et al., 2024). The researcher reported the findings objectively, highlighting any shortcomings and challenges.

Results

A total of 185 questionnaires were distributed to top-level managers across 69 Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) in Kenya. Out of these, 166 were successfully completed and returned, representing a response rate of 89.7%, which falls within a satisfactory limit of 60-70% for reliability and generalization of the study findings (Fincham, 2008)

Descriptive Statistics for Regulating Distress

The study sought to determine respondents' level of agreement with various statements relating to regulating distress within Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs). This construct was assessed through items measuring the supervisor's ability to manage conflicts, maintain a holding environment, and provide direction and goal clarity during periods of organizational pressure.

Table 1 shows that all items had mean scores between 3.789 and 3.928, with an overall aggregate mean of 3.875 and a standard deviation of 0.913. These results indicate that respondents generally agreed that their supervisors demonstrate adaptive capabilities associated with effective regulation of distress within their organizations, thus enabling teams to function effectively even under challenging circumstances.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for Regulating Distress

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
My supervisor effectively manages conflicts within the team.	166	3.789	0.879
My supervisor maintains a calm environment, even in challenging situations.	166	3.849	0.821
My supervisor maintains a supportive environment, even in challenging situations.	166	3.837	0.936
My supervisor handles stressful situations with clear and composed decision-making.	166	3.904	0.896
My supervisor clearly communicates goals and expectations.	166	3.928	1.000
My supervisor provides clear direction and guidance during complex tasks.	166	3.904	0.942
My supervisor motivates the team by aligning individual and organizational goals.	166	3.910	0.920
Aggregate Score		3.875	0.913

Source: Field Data (2025)

Diagnostic Tests for Regulating Distress and Organizational Effectiveness

Normality was examined using the Shapiro–Wilk test, which evaluates whether data are drawn from a normally distributed population. According to Gonzalez-Estrada and Cosmes (2019), a p-value greater than 0.05 indicates that the data is normally distributed.

Table 2

Normality Test for Regulating Distress and Organizational Effectiveness

Variable	Statistic	df	Sig. (p-value)	Conclusion
Regulating Distress	0.937	166	0.094	Data normally distributed
Organizational Effectiveness	0.939	166	0.107	Data normally distributed

Source: Field Data (2025)

The results in Table 2 indicate that the Shapiro–Wilk test produced p-values of 0.094 for regulating distress and 0.107 for organizational effectiveness, both of which exceed the 0.05 significance threshold. This confirms that the data for the two variables were approximately normally distributed, thereby satisfying the normality assumption required for parametric analysis. Minor deviations from normality are acceptable when the sample size exceeds 100, as was the case in this study (N = 166), thus validating the data’s suitability for subsequent correlation and regression analyses (Field, 2018).

Linearity Test for Regulating Distress and Organizational Effectiveness

The assumption of linearity was assessed using a scatterplot showing the relationship between regulating distress and organizational effectiveness. The data points in Figure 2 form a distinct upward-sloping linear trend. This pattern indicates that as regulating distress increases, organizational effectiveness also tends to increase, suggesting a positive linear relationship between the two variables. The points are moderately clustered around the fitted regression line, showing consistent association across observations. There is no evidence of curvature or heteroscedasticity, meaning the relationship between the variables is linear. Based on these observations, the assumption of linearity was satisfied (Hair et al., 2021).

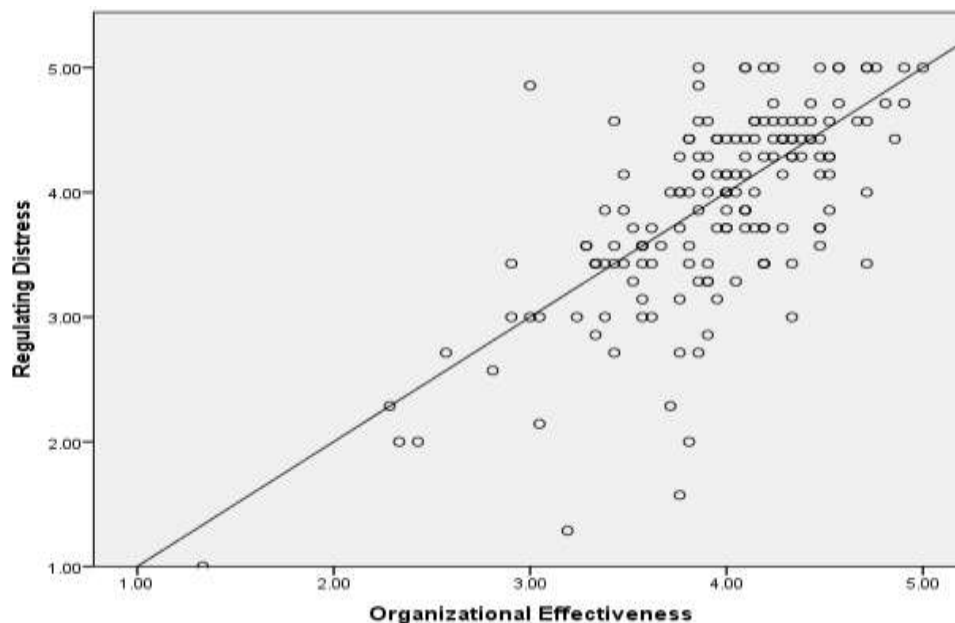


Figure 2: Scatter Plot for Regulating Distress and Organizational Effectiveness

Table 2

Multicollinearity Test for Regulating Distress and Organizational Effectiveness

Indicator	Recommended Threshold	Observed Value	Conclusion
Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)	VIF < 10	1.764	No multicollinearity detected
Tolerance	Tolerance > 0.20	0.567	No multicollinearity detected

Source: Field Data (2025)

Multicollinearity was evaluated using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and Tolerance statistics to ensure that independent variables were not highly intercorrelated. The computed VIF value of 1.764 and Tolerance value of 0.567 in Table 3 are within the recommended thresholds, confirming that there was no evidence of multicollinearity (Purwanto & Sudargini, 2021). Therefore, regulating distress was independent of other predictors and suitable for regression inclusion. The diagnostic tests confirmed that the dataset met all key assumptions necessary for inferential analysis.

Correlation analysis Between Regulating Distress and Organizational Effectiveness

Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was used to assess the strength and direction of the association between regulating distress and organizational effectiveness. The correlation results are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4

Correlation Analysis between Regulating Distress and Organizational Effectiveness

		Organizational Effectiveness	Conflict management Holding Environment	Goal Setting
Organizational Effectiveness	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	1		
Conflict Management	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.682**	1	
Holding Environment	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.664**	.094
Providing Direction / Goal Setting	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.123	.319
		.701**	.023	.067
		.000	.234	.067

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Field Data (2025)

All three parameters of regulating distress had strong, positive, and statistically significant relationships with organizational effectiveness. Providing direction through goal setting recorded the strongest correlation ($r = 0.701$), conflict management also demonstrated a strong correlation ($r = 0.682$), and holding environment showed a similarly strong association ($r = 0.664$). The significance levels ($p = 0.000$) for all confirm that these relationships did not occur by chance and that improvements in any of the three parameters are likely to correspond with higher organizational effectiveness among FBOs in Kenya.

Regression analysis Between Regulating Distress and Organizational Effectiveness

A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the influence of regulating distress on Organizational Effectiveness among FBOs in Kenya. The analysis sought to establish whether changes in leaders' ability to regulate distress could statistically predict variations in organizational effectiveness.

The model summary in Table 4 shows that the correlation coefficient (R) between regulating distress and organizational effectiveness was 0.695, indicating a moderate to strong positive relationship. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was 0.483, suggesting that approximately 48.3% of the variation in organizational effectiveness can be explained by regulating distress. The remaining 51.7% are explained by other factors not considered in the study and the error term. The Adjusted R^2 value of 0.480 confirms that the explanatory power of the model remains stable even after adjusting the sample size. The standard error of the estimate (0.395) indicates a relatively small average deviation between observed and predicted values, implying a good model fit.

Table 3

Regression Model Summary for Regulating Distress and Organizational Effectiveness

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.695 ^a	.483	.480	.39520
a. Predictors: (Constant), Regulating Distress				
b. Dependent Variable: Organizational Effectiveness				

Source: Field Data (2025)

The ANOVA results in Table 5 show an F-statistic of 153.518 with a corresponding p-value of 0.000, which is below the 0.05 significance threshold. The critical F-value from the F-distribution table at a 0.05 level of significance and (1,164) degrees of freedom was 3.899. Since the computed F-value (153.518) exceeds the critical value (3.899), the regression model is statistically significant.

Table 5

Regression ANOVA Results for the Relationship between Regulating Distress and Organizational Effectiveness

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	23.977	1	23.977	153.518	.000 ^b
	Residual	25.614	164	.156		
Total		49.591	165			

- a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Effectiveness
- b. Predictors: (Constant), Regulating Distress

Source: Field Data (2025)

Table 6 shows that the unstandardized regression coefficient ($B = 0.491$) was positive and statistically significant ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). This means that for every one-unit increase in regulating distress, organizational effectiveness increases by approximately 0.491 units, holding other factors constant. The standardized coefficient ($Beta = 0.695$) indicates a strong and direct positive effect, consistent with the correlation results. The t-statistic of 12.390 further confirms that the coefficient for regulating distress is significantly different from zero, reinforcing that the predictor has a meaningful contribution to the model. The intercept ($B = 2.038$) represents the estimated level of organizational effectiveness when regulating distress is held at zero, providing the model's baseline value. The overall regression model was statistically significant ($F(1,164) = 153.518, p < 0.05$), explaining 48.3% of the variance in organizational effectiveness among FBOs. The fitted regression equation can be expressed as: $\text{Organizational Effectiveness} = 2.038 + 0.491(\text{Regulating Distress}) + \epsilon$

Table 6

Regression Coefficients for the Relationship between Regulating Distress and Organizational Effectiveness

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.038	.157		13.013	.000
	Regulating Distress	.491	.040	.695	12.390	.000

- a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Effectiveness
- b. Independent Variable: Regulating Distress

Source: Field Data (2025)

Hypothesis Testing

The null hypothesis was stated as:

H_0 : *Regulating distress has no significant influence on the organizational effectiveness of Faith Based Organizations in Kenya.*

The results in Tables 5 and 6 suggest that regulating distress is a strong and statistically significant predictor of organizational effectiveness among FBOs in Kenya. These findings therefore lead to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Discussions

The study sought to establish the extent to which regulating distress influenced organizational effectiveness. Regulating distress was measured based on how well the organizational leadership managed conflict, created a holding environment that allowed employees to express their views, experiment without fear, and provided direction through setting goals (Northouse, 2021). Among the three dimensions of regulating distress, providing direction through setting of goals recorded the strongest correlation ($r = 0.701$), indicating that leaders who offer clear guidance, articulate expectations, and maintain directional clarity contribute the most to organizational effectiveness. These results resonate with the findings by Dada et al. (2021) who established that strategic direction boosted operational effectiveness in Nigerian FBOs. They argued that setting goals and giving direction helped employees to focus on the important aspects of their work thus reducing negative effects that come with change. However, even though both studies focused on FBOs, the study in Nigeria was focused on innovation and managerial competencies necessary for FBO resistance.

Conflict management exhibited a moderate correlation ($r = 0.682$), indicating that leaders who resolve disputes constructively, equilibrating conflict at optimal levels to sustain robust team dynamics, augment organisational stability and efficacy. Importantly, when leadership regulates conflict intensity, fosters discursive freedom, provides strategic guidance during transitions, and maintains emotional equanimity amidst uncertainty, FBOs realise enhanced synergy, adaptability, and goal attainment. These findings corroborate Safitri and Saputra (2023), who argued that organisational effectiveness is contingent upon conflict governance. This also aligns with Mohamed et al. (2024), who identified that conflict management strategies facilitate goal-conducive environments in Somalia, albeit through an exploratory research design. Furthermore, this study reinforces Northouse (2021), asserting that adaptive leaders must calibrate organisational stress within tolerable thresholds, as harmful distress erodes morale and performance. Consequently, FBO leaders who exhibit affective stability under pressure directly bolster psychological safety and sustained collective performance.

The study further established that leaders proficient in mitigating conflict and tension augment collaboration and interpersonal trust. These results corroborate (Lannes, 2021), who posited that leaders who effectively regulate workplace distress foster synergy and mitigate attrition by preserving team stability. Similarly, John-Eke and Akintokunbo (2020) observed that leaders who modulate distress through conflict intervention cultivate harmonious environments conducive to heightened performance. Correspondingly, Shabani et al. (2022) identified conflict management as a primary determinant of organisational efficacy within both private and public sectors in Kosovo, asserting that it promotes equity and accountability, thereby catalysing employee engagement. Notably, while Shabani et al. (2022) focused on public-private sectors and relied exclusively on correlational analysis, the current study employed correlation and regression to triangulate and validate these findings in Kenyan FBOs.

Correspondingly, Safitri and Saputra (2023) underscored that emotionally resilient leaders preempt anxiety and cognitive dissonance by equilibrating compassion with accountability. These findings suggest that distress regulation within FBOs transcends mere stress management; it involves cultivating emotional equilibrium and trust, enabling subordinates to perform with intentionality and conviction amidst adversity. This alignment reinforces the premise that emotional regulation is a pivotal adaptive leadership competency, facilitating rationality,

judicious decision-making, and the mitigation of panic during crises. Likewise, Siddiqua et al. (2022) established that adaptive leaders who manifest composure and self-regulation during exigencies incentivise followers to mirror such stability, fostering collective resilience. Within FBOs, where emotive and spiritual dimensions are inextricably linked, a leader's affective steadiness provides vital reassurance and ensures ecclesiastical continuity. Consequently, distress regulation serves not only to preserve organisational order but also to mirror the moral and spiritual integrity required of leadership in religiously oriented institutions.

The holding environment demonstrated a moderate association ($r = 0.664$), suggesting that leaders who cultivate supportive and psychologically safe atmospheres facilitate sustained focus and performance under duress. These findings corroborate Heifetz et al. (2009), who conceptualised distress regulation as a leader's capacity to modulate pressure during adaptive challenges by establishing a holding environment where subordinates confront complexities without succumbing to pressure. Respondents indicated that leaders who regulate distress facilitate transparent discourse, active feedback, and emotional scaffolding, enabling the candid addressing of challenges without fear of retribution. Participants identified humility, empathy, and mentorship as quintessential leadership attributes for mitigating organisational distress. This aligns with Northouse (2021), who characterised distress regulation as the creation of a safe holding environment that catalyses reflection, dialogue, and innovation. Similarly, Meng and Berger (2019) determined that leaders who effectively manage collective anxiety enhance job satisfaction and collaborative problem-solving. Within FBOs where humility, empathy, and compassion underpin the organisational ethos, psychological safety reinforces institutional belonging and teleological alignment. Consequently, affective regulation and relational transparency are indispensable for both employee welfare and enduring organisational efficacy. In China, Rasool et al. (2021) identified a positive nexus between organisational support and work engagement, highlighting the criticality of supportive environments for goal attainment. However, that study focused on Chinese SMEs and was grounded in Conservation of Resources and Organisational Support theories.

The study established that leaders who equilibrate pressure with support attain superior organisational effectiveness. Respondents observed that supervisors articulated clear expectations while providing the scaffolding necessary to prevent cognitive overwhelm. This corroborates Heifetz et al. (2009), who posited that adaptive leaders must maintain a precarious balance between challenging subordinates and shielding them from debilitating stress to facilitate learning. Correspondingly, Northouse (2021) argued that while insufficient distress fosters complacency, excessive tension precipitates burnout; thus, efficient leaders calibrate stress at optimal thresholds. In this context, equilibrium was manifest in leaders who incentivised initiative while offering spiritual grounding, addressing both operational imperatives and emotional well-being, a critical dualism for mission-driven entities.

These results further resonate with adaptive leadership theory's emphasis on emotional intelligence as a catalyst for resilience. This framework necessitates that practitioners remain self-aware and proficient in modulating the emotional dynamics of followers (Northouse, 2021). By mitigating emotional contagion, leaders establish the stability required for sustained performance amidst turbulence. This supports Sunderman et al. (2020), who highlighted that such regulation enables adaptive capacity, the institutional ability to navigate change without compromising strategic focus. Within Kenyan FBOs, this capacity manifests as mission continuity despite external exigencies, such as donor volatility or political instability.

Conclusions

Based on the empirical results, regulating distress, a key component of adaptive leadership, is an important aspect that leaders in FBOs should have. Goal-setting and the provision of clear direction are important components of regulating distress, that serve as the primary catalysts for operational success in the Kenyan FBO sector. For Kenyan FBOs, the articulation of expectations and directional clarity offer a vital stabilising force. This fills a significant contextual gap by confirming that strategic guidance is essential for preventing mission drift and mitigating employee anxiety during periods of change, thereby extending findings previously limited to other regional or secular contexts.

Additionally, the constructive management of conflict is a foundational necessity that leadership has to have, rather than a mere administrative function. By maintaining conflict at optimal levels, leadership fosters a culture of accountability and fairness that is indispensable for sustaining team stability. This conclusion bridges the gap in regional scholarship by establishing that conflict resolution strategies are a determinant of effectiveness, specifically tailored to the high-emotion and volunteer-heavy environments inherent to FBOs in Kenya.

The creation of a holding environment is deeply intertwined with the values of humility and empathy. Such an environment acts as a cultural buffer, enabling personnel to confront complex adaptive challenges without succumbing to overwhelming pressure. This addresses a theoretical void by demonstrating that relational transparency and psychological safety are not generic leadership traits but context-specific requirements for FBOs, where the convergence of emotional and spiritual work demands a higher degree of empathetic leadership than is typically observed in industrial or secular sectors.

Finally, the capacity for emotional regulation is concluded to be both a leadership competency and a spiritual imperative. Leaders who model composure and emotional steadiness prevent the spread of emotional contagion, ensuring the organisation remains rational and resilient amidst external turbulence. This finding links the secular principles of adaptive leadership theory with faith-based practice, concluding that emotional regulation is an important mechanism through which Kenyan FBOs preserve organisational order and reflect the moral integrity expected within religiously oriented structures. The study therefore serves to empirically respond to the critiques of the adaptive leadership theory who argued that the theory lacks a clear moral dimension. Ultimately, the ability of leadership to balance pressure with support is identified as a core requirement for sustaining the long-term effectiveness and mission continuity of these organisations within the Kenyan socio-religious landscape.

Recommendations for The Study

FBOs should institutionalize leadership capacity-building programs focusing on setting clear goals, conflict management, and a supportive environment. These trainings sessions should prepare leaders to recognize early signs of burnout, manage workplace anxiety, and maintain a balance between pressure and productivity. Such practices would also help the FBOs and other institutions to have an edge as they interact with funders of their programs.

At the policy level, policy makers within the FBO sector should integrate stress management and resilience frameworks into their human resource policies. Regular staff well-being audits, debriefing sessions after intense ministry or humanitarian work, and internal mentorship systems can help leaders maintain organizational composure during crises. Leadership

evaluation tools should also include emotional regulation and team support as performance indicators. Monitoring and evaluation tools by donors of these FBOs should be able to capture these practices to gauge the health of the organization and its ability to accomplish their mission.

Suggestions for Future Research

The study was anchored on adaptive leadership theory that has six constructs, but focused on one, leaving out getting on the balcony, identifying adaptive challenges, maintaining disciplined attention, giving work back to the people, and protecting leadership voices from below. These constructs are important in the practice of adaptive leadership not only in FBOs but in different industries. Future studies should focus on these constructs in relation to organizational effectiveness.

The study focused on a wide spectrum of FBOs that are working on various sectors including humanitarian aid, health, education, evangelism among others. Each of these different sectors bring unique challenges and therefore future research could focus on specific FBO sectors reveal leadership dynamics unique to each of the specific sectors.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Author Contributions:

Both Authors contributed significantly to the conception, research, writing and preparation of the of the manuscript.

Ethical Approval and Research License

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the USIU-Africa Institutional Ethics and Review Committee (REF: USIU-A/ISERC/US838-2025) and NACOSTI (License No: NACOSTI/P/25/4175833).

Licensing Statement

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