The Christian non-profit organizational leader is critical to the organization’s success. Christian non-profit leaders need to be leaders to followers, have a vision, be strategic in planning, have organizational skills, and be knowledgeable about reaching individuals in and outside the organization (Sims & Quatro, 2005, p. 90). It is imperative that an organization’s leader, especially a non-profit organization, has the appropriate leadership style (Uzonwanne, 2015).

The study of servant-leadership style and how it may influence growth in Christian non-profit organizations was a topic for analysis due to the lack of current research. Even though there are multiple publications regarding servant-leadership (including senior-leadership, non-profit organizations, and growth), there is a need for research on Christian non-profit organizations regarding servant-leadership influencing growth (Cortes & Herrman, 2021; Lin et al., 2018; Luciano et al., 2020; Shao et al., 2022; Wallace et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2020).

This research examined the servant-leadership style of Christian non-profit organizational senior leaders and determined if those leadership styles influence the organization’s growth. The material presented regarding this research is in the following sequence: identifying the
problem in Christian non-profit organizations related to servant-leadership and growth; listing the questions that the study sought to answer; clarify the principles of servant-leadership; discussion on the areas of service projects, mentorship programs, and organizational numerical growth; and ending with an analysis of the questions and the findings of the research.

A PROBLEM

A problem that may be present in Christian non-profit organizations regarding leadership is determining if the leadership style senior leaders exhibit falls into the category of servant-leadership and if the servant-leadership is impacting the organization’s growth. Harrison and Murray (2012) provide insight into leadership within any non-profit organization, giving the following list of effective leaders:

• Committed to the mission (passionate, enthusiastic, engaged)
• Charismatic (inspirational, communicates a broad vision others can connect to)
• Extraverted (though not bombastic)
• At ease with people of all types
• Proactive; takes the initiative in raising issues
• Takes time – interacts frequently; people have no feeling of being rushed
• Listens, does not argue or criticize
• Excellent at clarifying and/or redefining issues, making them easier to deal with
• Good at finding common ground when differences arise; a good conflict manager (p. 423)

Harrison and Murray (2012) also categorize the less effective leaders of non-profit organizations as the following:

• Used position to advance personal career or agenda
• Big ego, dictatorial; Introverted, nice, well-meaning but not able
to inspire others; Uncomfortable in a leadership position
• Reactive; inactive
• Responded aggressively to issues; avoided issues altogether
• Vacillated; took different positions depending on whom she/he
  spoke to last
• Created or avoided conflict (p. 423)
  However, the issue remains on whether servant-leadership of senior
leaders in Christian non-profit organizations influences growth.

QUESTIONS
  This study sought to answer three questions to determine the
relationship of servant-leadership among senior leaders within Christian
non-profit organizations and the impact the leadership style has on the
growth of the organization:
  1. What is the relationship between the growth of service projects
     within a Christian non-profit organization and the servant-
     leadership of the senior leader?
  2. What is the relationship between the growth of mentorship
     programs within a Christian non-profit organization and the
     servant-leadership of the senior leader?
  3. What is the relationship between the numerical growth of
     members within a Christian non-profit organization and the
     servant-leadership of the senior leader?

SERVANT-LEADERSHIP
  Before presenting the data and answering the questions, there needs
to be clarification on servant-leadership and on the three areas of service
projects, mentorship programs, and organizational numerical growth.
Starting with servant-leadership, Greenleaf (1977) is the first to explain
servant-leadership through *The Journey to the East* (Hesse, 1968), a story
of a group of sojourners on a quest while accompanied by a servant, bringing joy and encouragement on their path. The myth reveals that the servant becomes lost while on the journey, resulting in the traveling companions becoming lost, discouraged, and hopeless without their servant. Throughout the narrative, the reader realizes that the servant is the true leader who led the sojourners on their path, guiding them with his leadership and selfless character.

Understanding Greenleaf’s foundation of servant-leadership, one can see the importance of implementing this leadership style among leaders. Greenleaf (1977) gives us a clear picture of what a servant-leader looks like, writing:

The servant leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions. (p. 13)

In his first publication on servant-leadership, Greenleaf (1970) explains the sole concept of a servant-leader. He compares it to other leadership styles in that servant-leaders strive to serve the priorities of others and ask if others grow as persons, become healthier, wiser, and more likely to become servants themselves. The questions Robert Greenleaf brought up then are the same questions organizations try to answer today.

A question that may be present when addressing servant-leadership is whether or not it is worth implementing in an organization. Greenleaf (2014) believes that to change society, the leader needs to be a servant and change people who can impact society, influenced by immorality, wars, poverty, discrimination, and failures (p. 21). Having established a foundation on the principles of servant-leadership, we now must have better understanding of the three areas that this study focused on: service
opportunities, mentorship programs, and organizational numerical growth.

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

In general, all non-profit organizations have different volunteer goals, but one commonality among these organizations is service opportunities. The general concept of service opportunities and service projects is servant-leadership: leading by serving others to improve their well-being. Christian non-profit organizations consist of volunteers who do not receive payment, are not professionals, and sacrifice their time and effort to accomplish the non-profit organization’s goals. Service opportunities within Christian non-profit organizations allow volunteers to experience growth and adapt to lifelong skills. Service opportunities vary depending on the type of non-profit organization.

Service opportunities and volunteering opportunities are two activities that religious non-profit organizations incorporate into their mission (English & Dicke, 2020). English and Dicke (2020) give insight into religious non-profit organizations working in the community, writing, “Non-profit economic development organizations are viable partners with local governments to generate solutions that encourage economic growth and improve the economic well-being of community members” (p. 401). Service opportunities and volunteering are connected to the servant-leadership style, as they focus on the needs of others and improving the lives of other people.

English and Dicke (2020) also point out that there are four functions of all types of non-profit organizations (religious or non-religious) and their voluntary actions: service delivery, social entrepreneurship, civic and political participation, and values and faith (p. 404). Of these listed, the two that seem most relevant to servant-leadership and service projects are service delivery and values and faith. Within the service delivery function, the goal of the organization
is that it “provides needed services and responds to government and market failure” (p. 404). Values and faith is the function that “allows volunteers, staff, and donors to express values, commitments, and faith through work” (p. 404).

Erdurmezli (2019) identifies six motives that volunteers strive to satisfy and experience, and servant-leadership is present within these volunteer motives: values, understanding, career, protection, enhancement, and social. These motives are discussed within the research data. However, to clarify, the motive of value instills that volunteers focus on the organization’s goals while instilling an unselfish desire to aid others. The volunteers of Christian non-profit organizations recognize why they volunteer and embody the concepts of servanthood for their organization.

The motive of understanding for a volunteer begins with learning the purpose of what is happening within the organization. This motive is closely related to the value motive, but the difference is that there is a cognitive awareness of what the individual brings to the organization. The volunteer understands that there is a bigger picture to what the organization offers to the community.

Volunteers can understand the significance of the service opportunities and transfer that knowledge to their life and work environments for the career motive. Within this motive, the result may be that the volunteer can learn from their time within the Christian non-profit organization and pass along information to their jobs. The career motive may enable them to increase awareness for their organization when talking amongst their co-workers.

The next motive for volunteers is the protection motive. This motive for volunteers allows the individual to assist an organization, and in turn, it helps the individual with negative feelings or personal guilts. This motive essentially aids the volunteer in checking their ego and helps the
volunteer focus on serving others. The protection motive is a smooth transition into the next motive of enhancement.

Enhancement for the volunteer centers around contributing to the personal growth of the individual volunteer. The growth of the individual volunteer centers on self-development and self-esteem. Volunteers who help a Christian non-profit organization (or any non-religious organization) may enhance their self-development skills and learning techniques that can be applied in everyday life. The same can be said about the self-esteem attribute: the volunteer increases self-esteem due to helping and serving others.

The final motive listed by Erdurmazlı (2019) is the social motive. The volunteer engaged in activities of a Christian non-profit organization has the opportunity to build relationships with friends and encounter new people while helping the organization. This motive can encompass previous motives by building self-esteem, checking the individual’s ego, and acquiring new experiences through understanding the organization’s needs. These six motives of volunteers will be discussed further in the presented data.

MENTORSHIP

The next growth area for discussion is the mentorship programs within Christian non-profit organizations. Mentorship is a craft that can impact organizations, leadership, and members positively. Mentoring involves a relationship in which one individual has more wisdom and experience, assists another person through passing knowledge, and the mentor can help the person develop skills and knowledge (Adeyemi, 2011, p. 368). Through mentorship programs, organizations can direct volunteers to accomplish the goal or goals of the organization. Mentorship is essential in programs and organizations unaffiliated with Christian non-profit organizations.

Jenson (2019) explains the need for mentorship in the field of
medicine, writing that individuals within the healthcare system have been affected by the presence of mentors, and it is through mentorship that individuals develop to become stronger and prosperous (p. 49). Eliades (2017) gives insight into activities for mentoring to equip others for leadership by recognizing the mentor, workplace, and protégé.

Regarding the first activity being the mentor, Eliades (2017) writes that the mentor “assists with the development of leadership skills, conveys positively about the roles of leadership, encourages others to take on the role of leadership, and identifies stretch assignments” (p. 41). The activities focus on the foundation of being a leader and improving leadership skills. A servant-leader understands the importance of mentoring others while developing skills and abilities. A significant aspect of these activities is that a mentor is an encourager and a teacher.

The second activity of the mentor is in the workplace. The mentor in the workplace activity “fosters leadership skill development, demonstrates a culture of positivity about the leadership, and provides an environment that supports aspiring leaders” (Eliades 2017, p. 41). The workplace activity is about positivity. The servant-leader ensures that the organization has a positive outlook on the leadership.

The last mentor activity is the protégé. The protégé aspect is about development for the protégé to become the appropriate leader for the organization. This activity involves the individual taking risks, being a champion for change, stepping out of their comfort zone, taking on assignments that will make their skills and readiness visible to leaders, and working with the boss to obtain the best outcome for the organization (p. 41).

Mentoring within Christian non-profit organizations can be accomplished through electronic resources or individual meetings; the vital aspect is that mentoring is happening in the organization. Leadership must recognize that mentoring others within an organization
is a way to develop the leadership skill of others within the organization and that the benefits of this include motivation, learning, and teaching norms, values, and opportunities (Gassman & Gleason, 2011, p. 57).

NUMERICAL GROWTH IN CHRISTIAN NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Growth in non-profit organizations is vital to the organization (Kim & Kim, 2018) and this is the same for Christian non-profit organizations. The growth of Christian non-profit organizations discussed within the study involves the numerical membership organizational growth. A way to evaluate an organization and have a clearer picture of growth is by utilizing an evaluation method. Northrop (2018) suggests, “Performing an intentional strategic planning process and then using the strategic plan are key. When an organization’s mission, strategy, and priorities are clear, the makeup of the board to support that strategy also becomes clear” (p. 57). Northrop’s (2018) view builds on the concept of bettering the organization, and it lacks leadership development, but Northrop explains that “using a formal board assessment process will strengthen both the board and the organization to ensure quality service delivery and mission fulfillment” (p. 60).

Kirkpatrick’s Four-Level Evaluation Model is a valuable resource for evaluating the performance of organizations and for the possibility of growth and focuses more on the concept of leadership within the organization (Russ-Eft & Preskill, 2009, pp. 74-75). The model consists of four levels (Russ-Eft & Preskill, 2009):

1. Level 1 evaluates the reactions of members participating in training and whether the leaders were credible.
2. Level 2 consists of evaluating the member’s training from the leaders.
3. Level 3 evaluation focuses on incorporating the newly gained knowledge from leaders into their jobs.
4. Level 4 evaluation centers on the organization’s results, answering whether the organization benefits and increases productivity. (p. 75)

The model of Kirkpatrick allows for a better understanding of how an organization might evaluate its members and see what areas of growth need to be improved. The first level of training focuses on the reactions of members of the organization. These reactions from members may consist of their initial response to experiences and leadership. Level 2 focuses on the leadership experience and training members receive. Key factors involved in this level of evaluation include questioning if the experience is valuable and whether or not the leadership is effective.

Level three of the Kirkpatrick model emphasizes using the knowledge gained from leadership and showing the knowledge through the organization’s work. When the evaluation questions this level, the answers will point to whether the leadership instills influence and knowledge in the individual. The fourth and final level has the focal point of organizational results, answering whether there are benefits from the leadership and whether leadership increases productivity.

Evaluation is the foundation for recognizing growth within the organization. Regarding evaluation, leadership must investigate whether leadership style among senior leaders allows growth. Allen et al. (2018) explore the significance of servant-leadership and non-profit organizations, in which a study shows that servant-leadership increases organizational commitment and the organization’s impact. One hundred and twenty-eight non-profit organization employees completed a survey that provides data indicating a strong relationship between servant-leadership and organizational commitment (Allen et al., 2018), which increases the numerical growth of the organization.
ANALYSES OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As discussed earlier, this study sought to answer three primary questions to determine the relationship of servant-leadership among senior leaders within Christian non-profit organizations and how the leadership style impacts the organization’s growth. Servant-leadership among organizations is beneficial (Obi et al., 2021; Shao et al., 2022), so the purpose was to identify variables that influence growth in these organizations. Below are the research questions, along with the findings:

The research study focused on servant-leadership within Christian non-profit organizations. Specifically, the study aimed to see the relationship between servant-leadership among senior leaders in Christian non-profit organizations and its influence on their growth. Greenleaf (1970) introduced the concept of servant-leadership and the importance of its implementation among leaders. Understanding the historical context of servant-leadership, the study answered the following questions:

1. What is the relationship between the growth of service projects within a Christian non-profit organization and the servant-leadership of the senior leader?
2. What is the relationship between the growth of mentorship programs within a Christian non-profit organization and the servant-leadership of the senior leader?
3. What is the relationship between the numerical growth of members within a Christian non-profit organization and the servant-leadership of the senior leader?

The research used a binary logistic regression test to determine the relationship between servant-leadership among senior leaders in Christian non-profit organizations and the organization’s growth in service projects, mentorship programs, and numerical growth. The leaders of the organizations received a self-reporting data survey that asked for the
numerical data of the past three years in service projects, mentorship programs, and the numerical growth of membership. The answers from the self-reporting data are designated one for growth and zero for no growth. The binary logistic regression then correlated the answers from the self-reporting data with the questionnaire from the followers.

The organization’s followers received the Servant Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ) developed by Liden et al. (2008). The questionnaire asked 28 questions, with answers given on a Likert scale. The questions centered around servant-leadership by asking specific questions that focus on attributes, activities, and characteristics that the organization’s leader exemplifies. After answering the questionnaire, the 28 questions have seven designated categories, with four questions falling into each category. The questionnaire categories are conceptual skills, empowering, helping subordinates grow and succeed, putting subordinates first, ethical behavior, emotional healing, and creating value for the community.

The binary logistic regression test determined the relationship between servant-leaders and growth in organizations. 21 tests were utilized to determine the relationship between servant-leadership and growth in service projects, mentorship programs, and numerical growth. There were 21 tests due to the seven categories of the SLQ and the three areas of growth in Christian non-profit organizations.

The study included 30 participants (30 leaders) from Christian non-profit organizations. All leaders and followers are from Christian non-profit organizations that are in Alabama. The organizations are all non-profit Christian organizations. As discussed earlier, the 30 leaders completed the self-reporting data survey, and the 30 followers completed the SLQ on the leader’s servant-leadership. The leaders consisted of male and female leaders, with close to 7% of the leader participants being female and 93% being male.
QUESTION ONE

The first question focuses on the relationship between servant-leadership and the growth of service projects within Christian non-profit organizations. The test compared the results of service project data in the self-reporting survey over the past three years to the SLQ data from the followers on the servant-leadership of their organizational leader. The binary regression test used binary code for growth or no growth in service projects of the Christian non-profit organization. It compared the data with the seven subcategories of the SLQ.

Through the data analysis of service growth and servant-leadership, the data shows that there is a relationship between these two categories. The subcategories of the SLQ reveal predictable growth variables in empowering, helping subordinates grow, and putting subordinates first. The test also shows no predictable variable in conceptual skills, ethical behavior, emotional healing, and creating value for the community.

Empowering is the first subcategory of the SLQ, and the data shows growth in servant-leadership and the organization. Question two of the questions asked in the empowering section of the SLQ estimates potential future growth. Question two of the SLQ states: He/She emphasizes the importance of giving back to the community. The data suggests that there will be growth if a servant-leader exudes the ideology of giving back to the community. The underlining concept here seems to be that a servant-leader will truly focus on serving others, especially those in the community. This relationship between servant-leadership and empowerment goes back to Spears (2009) on his point that building community is a characteristic that contributes to servant-leadership.

Another question within empowering others is question 16, which states: He/She is involved in community activities. The data shows that a servant-leader actively involved in the community, essentially showing followers the example of service, will increase the organizational growth.
in service projects. The adage is true here in that actions speak louder than words. Data for this category of community activities support the concept that religious non-profit organizations and leaders strive to serve those in the community (English & Dicke, 2020). As the data shows, servant-leaders who genuinely have characteristics and work at serving others will increase the organization’s growth.

The second subcategory the data recognized as having growth is helping subordinates grow. Of the questions in this category of servant-leadership, questions 17 and 24 have positive outlooks. Question 17 states: He/She has a thorough understanding of the organization and its goals. Through this question, the follower recognizes the importance of whether the servant-leader strives to adequately adhere to the organization’s goals. Based on the estimate plots, growth occurs when the servant-leader genuinely comprehends the organization’s goals. This attribute of understanding organizational goals proves that a servant-leader is not focusing on their agenda but on the agenda of others and the betterment of the organization. The research suggests that servant-leaders will influence their organization’s growth if they understand its goals.

Question 24 on the idea of helping subordinates grow states: He/She can solve work problems with new or creative ideas. This data suggests growth in service projects for an organization when the servant-leader can solve problems creatively. The concept of foresight given by Spears (2009) previously mentioned that a servant-leader could foresee likely outcomes. This data echoes that concept along with the writings of Mazurek (2022), by which servant-leaders aid the problem using past experiences.

The final subcategory of the SLQ where growth is present is putting subordinates first. Question 18 allows for the highest growth of the questions in this category. Question 18 states: He/She gives others the freedom to handle difficult situations in the way they feel is best.
As the data shows, if a senior leader in an organization allows followers the freedom to handle complex problems and situations, there will be growth. As stated earlier, Erdurmazlı (2019) identifies six motives volunteers strive to satisfy and experience: values, understanding, career, protection, enhancement, and social. These motives are clear indicators of individuals involved in service-oriented organizations. Erdurmazlı (2019) points out that servant-leaders understand and want to enhance the organization, which correlates with the SLQ question on allowing followers to handle problems.

QUESTION TWO

The second question focused on the relationship between servant-leadership and the growth of mentorship programs in Christian non-profit organizations. As with the first test on service project growth, the test compared the results of mentorship program data in the self-reporting survey over the past three years to the SLQ data from the followers on the servant-leadership of their organizational leader. The binary regression test uses binary code for growth or no growth in service projects of the Christian non-profit organization. It compared the data with the seven subcategories of the SLQ.

Question two uses the binary logistic regression test for analyzing the growth category within mentorship programs. The data reveals no relationship between servant-leadership in Christian non-profit organizations and the growth in mentorship programs. The data shows no statistically significant correlation in all seven subcategories of the SLQ relating to mentor growth.

QUESTION THREE

The third and final question focused on the relationship between servant-leadership and the numerical growth of members of the Christian non-profit organization. Along with the previous tests on the first two
research questions, the test for this research question compared the results of organizational numerical growth data in the self-reporting survey over the past three years to the SLQ data from the followers on the servant-leadership of their organizational leader. The binary regression test uses binary code for growth or no growth in service projects of the Christian non-profit organization. It compared the data with the seven subcategories of the SLQ.

The statistical test shows a positive relationship between a servant-leader and numerical membership growth in Christian non-profit organizations. Specifically, the numerical growth is seen through empowering and creating value for the community.

The first relationship the data shows for the numerical growth of membership in Christian non-profit organizations is in the category of empowering. Question two in the SLQ shows a positive relationship, and the question states: He/She emphasizes the importance of giving back to the community. The data on this question suggests that a servant-leader within a Christian non-profit organization will increase the organization’s growth if the leader emphasizes giving back to the community. This question on empowerment echoes the writings of Thumma and Beene (2021) on the topic of stewardship. Along with the question, the data backs up the ideology of Thumma and Beene (2021) regarding stewardship, as it focuses on the organization’s values. If an organization truly instills the importance of serving the community and the servant-leader embodies those principles, it will lead to growth.

Question 23 also shows the highest variable of numerical growth, and this question states: He/She encourages others to volunteer in the community. The data for this category and question goes back to Erdurmazlı (2019) on the motives of values and the social aspect of the organization. The follower is answering a question about empowering others within the organization to commit to the community’s well-being.
As the data suggests, followers positively respond to this attribute, bringing numerical growth to the organization.

The second relationship found in research question three is the positive relationship between servant-leadership and creating value for the community. Question 14 states: He/She is always honest; this is reminiscent of the writings of Mani (2015) and Bowman (2005) on the aspects of teaching. Mani (2015) uses Jesus Christ as an example of teaching followers, and Bowman (2005) illustrates that a teacher is honest. A servant-leader who has the characteristic of being honest instills the concept of trust, which leads to the numerical growth of the organization.

Question 28 states: He/She values honesty more than profits. Grobler and Flotman (2021) write on conceptualization and mention that being a visionary is as vital as love, altruism, empowerment, humility, service, and trust. This concept of vision and honesty seems to go together in this question. The data shows that a servant-leader who puts honesty over profits understands creating value for the community. Therefore, a leader who embodies honesty values the organization and followers over profits and recognizes the importance of truthfulness among followers will cause growth for the organization.

SUMMARY

The data and findings of this research provide insight into the importance of servant-leadership within Christian non-profit organizations and how servant-leadership can influence growth within those organizations. Recognizing the value of servant-leadership and the lack of analyzing servant-leadership in Christian non-profit organizations and the relationship to growth (Cortes & Herrman, 2021; Lin et al., 2018; Luciano et al., 2020; Shao et al., 2022; Wallace et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2020), the current research suggests it contributes to organizational growth. This study helps clarify the relationship servant-leaders have in growing service projects, mentorship programs, and the numerical
growth of membership in Christian non-profit organizations.

The research study and findings demonstrate the significance of implementing servant-leadership and the relationship this leadership has regarding growth. The SLQ developed by Liden et al. (2008) is an essential asset in analyzing the servant-leadership qualities of senior leaders. The SLQ gives leaders, followers, and organizations essential information on what areas of servant-leadership the leader has positive qualities. The SLQ also allows for further discussion into categories of leaders lacking servant-leadership characteristics. This research specifically utilized senior leaders of Christian non-profit organizations. Given the findings, servant-leaders of Christian non-profit organizations significantly influence the organizations’ growth, especially in empowering, helping subordinates grow, putting subordinates first, and creating value for the community.

This study allows for further discussion and research on servant-leadership and the relationship of growth for Christian non-profit organizations. Although this study uses Christian non-profit organizations as the foundational participants, future studies may need to analyze servant-leadership among for-profit organizations. Organizations that lack the vision and understanding behind the importance of servant-leadership and growth are only hindering themselves from future growth and positive follower reactions. As the data shows, senior leaders of Christian non-profit organizations that genuinely embodied servant-leadership had an increase in growth in service projects and numerical growth for the organization. This data can contribute to organizational growth and organizational leaders. As followers and leaders of organizations strive to better themselves and their organizations along with finding ways for growth, utilizing servant-leadership and having the capability to evaluate leaders continuously will prove to be a positive plan of action for the future.
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