

MEDIATING ROLE OF CONGREGATIONAL ENGAGEMENT ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADERSHIP CAPACITY AND GROWTH OF REGISTERED PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of Study: The study sought to determine the mediating effect of congregational engagement on the relationship between leadership capacity and the growth of registered Pentecostal churches in Kenya.

Problem Statement: Although existing studies have explored direct relationships between leadership variables and church growth, the mechanisms through which leadership capacity influences growth outcomes remain insufficiently understood.

Methodology: The study adopted a positivist research philosophy and a cross-sectional survey design. The target population comprised 693 respondents drawn from 33 registered Pentecostal churches affiliated with the National Council of Churches of Kenya with a sample size of 282 respondents. Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS version 29 through descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and a four-step hierarchical regression analysis following the Baron and Kenny (1986) mediation procedure.

Result: Congregational engagement partially mediated the relationship between leadership capacity and the growth of registered Pentecostal churches in Kenya. The introduction of congregational engagement into the regression model reduced the direct effect of leadership capacity on growth from $\beta = 0.615$ to $\beta = 0.333$, with the indirect effect estimated at 0.282, representing approximately 45.9 percent of the total effect.

Recommendation: Denominational leadership should establish policies that provide structured opportunities for congregants to participate in church activities and decision-making.

Keywords: *Congregational engagement, leadership capacity, church growth, mediation, registered Pentecostal churches, Kenya*

INTRODUCTION

The growth of registered Pentecostal churches has remained a central concern in Christian theology, missiology, and ecclesiastical practice across centuries and continents (Uroko, 2024). Church growth is widely regarded as an indicator of spiritual vitality, organizational effectiveness, and community relevance in contemporary society (Amenyedzi, 2025). Scholars have broadened the understanding of growth beyond numerical increase to encompass spiritual maturity, leadership effectiveness, financial sustainability, community outreach, and institutional resilience (Amakiri, 2025; Odion, 2023). The intersection of leadership, congregational dynamics, and institutional governance has thus become an increasingly important area of scholarly inquiry in the study of church growth trajectories (Gyimah, 2025).

Congregational engagement describes the extent to which church members actively participate in the spiritual, relational, and operational life of a congregation, moving beyond passive attendance toward committed involvement in worship, service, discipleship, stewardship, and community outreach (Mwihia, 2025). It encompasses participatory worship, ministry engagement, evangelistic activities, financial stewardship, discipleship involvement, and organized community service (Akindolie, 2025). Congregational engagement reflects the degree to which members internalize shared values and identify with their church's institutional mission (Henry, Gathogo & Munyao, 2025). Leadership capacity represents a foundational driver of church growth, reflecting the collective competencies, skills, and spiritual maturity of church leaders (Kirk, 2025). Leadership capacity encompasses vision formulation, governance acumen, administrative efficiency, pastoral care competence, and strategic oversight (Kesumawati & Gultom, 2025).

In Kenya, registered Pentecostal churches are among the most significant and fastest-growing segments of the Christian population. The 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census indicates that Christianity accounts for 85.5 percent of the national population, with Protestant and Evangelical traditions forming a substantial proportion of this demographic (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Despite their growth and institutional visibility, registered Pentecostal churches in Kenya encounter governance and operational challenges that affect sustainability and public perception. Internal leadership conflicts, succession disputes, and accountability gaps have occasionally disrupted congregational stability and membership retention (Thiga, Pam & Nkansah-Obrempong, 2021). The disparity between religious identification and active participation is further underscored by findings indicating that only 56 percent of self-identified religious Kenyans attend worship services weekly (NCCK, 2022).

Existing studies have predominantly focused on direct correlations between leadership variables and growth outcomes, without systematically examining the mediating role of congregational engagement in translating leadership capacity into growth results (Henry, Gathogo & Munyao, 2025; Ndungo, Cheluget & Jirma, 2025). The pathways through which leadership capacity translates into church growth through the active involvement and participation of congregants remain insufficiently understood, constituting a conceptual gap in the evidence base. This study therefore aimed at addressing this gap by determining the mediating effect of congregational engagement on the relationship between leadership capacity and the growth of registered Pentecostal churches in Kenya.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Registered Pentecostal churches in Kenya have experienced considerable growth over the past three decades; however, this growth has become increasingly uneven, stagnating or declining in a significant number of congregational contexts (Uroko, 2024; NCKK, 2023). Institutional and organizational reports from umbrella bodies such as the NCKK have additionally noted declining financial giving and reduced volunteerism within certain congregations (NCKK, 2023), pointing to systemic challenges that extend beyond membership numbers. Internal governance failures and leadership conflicts constitute a significant driver of membership loss among registered Pentecostal churches in Kenya (Thiga, Pam & Nkansah-Obrempong, 2021).

Existing studies, including those by Henry, Gathogo and Munyao (2025), Mabborang (2022), and Rasheed et al. (2022), predominantly examine the direct relationship between leadership variables and organizational growth. Nevertheless, a conceptual gap remains regarding the mechanisms through which leadership capacity influences growth outcomes, as the mediating role of congregational engagement has received limited scholarly attention. Consequently, the pathways through which leadership capacity translates into church growth through the active involvement and participation of congregants remain insufficiently understood. A methodological gap further compounds these limitations, as studies have relied predominantly on cross-sectional designs and univariate regression models that are unable to simultaneously test mediation effects within a unified analytical framework. This study therefore addressed these gaps by determining the mediating effect of congregational engagement on the relationship between leadership capacity and the growth of registered Pentecostal churches in Kenya.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To determine the mediating effect of congregational engagement on the relationship between leadership capacity and the growth of registered Pentecostal churches in Kenya.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

H₀: There is no statistically significant mediating effect of congregational engagement on the relationship between leadership capacity and the growth of registered Pentecostal churches in Kenya.

VALUE OF THE STUDY

This study is of significance in the field of management, leadership, and religious organizational studies because it examines how congregational engagement mediates the relationship between leadership capacity and the growth of registered Pentecostal churches in Kenya. The study contributes to Social Exchange Theory by illustrating how leadership capacity fosters reciprocal relationships between leaders and congregants, thereby increasing engagement, commitment, and participatory behaviour in response to effective leadership practices. To policymakers and regulatory authorities, including the Registrar of Societies and the NCKK, the study offers information that will guide the formulation of policies and regulatory frameworks that encourage structured congregational mobilization and improved institutional performance. To practitioners, especially bishops, senior pastors, and church elders, the findings provide practical guidance on how to translate leadership capacities into structured opportunities for congregational participation. The study contributes to empirical literature on growth, leadership, and governance in faith-based organizations, and provides a basis for future scholars interested in banking consolidation and church growth in Kenya and related markets.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study examined the mediating effect of congregational engagement on the relationship between leadership capacity and the growth of registered Pentecostal churches in Kenya. It focused on the 33 registered Pentecostal churches affiliated with the National Council of Churches of Kenya and operating under the Societies Act (Cap 108). The unit of observation consisted of bishops, assistant bishops, pastors and church elders who were directly involved in strategic leadership, spiritual governance and congregational administration. Geographically, the study covered all counties in Kenya where the 33 registered Pentecostal churches maintained operational headquarters or primary ministry centres. The study covered the period between February 2026 and August 2026.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews the relevant literature for the study. It discusses the theoretical foundation underpinning the research and examines empirical studies aligned with the study variables.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory was originally developed by Homans (1958), who argued that social behaviour is driven by an assessment of potential rewards and costs associated with social interaction, and that individuals and groups engage in relationships only when the perceived benefits outweigh the costs (Homans, 1958). Blau (1964) expanded this foundational concept by demonstrating that social structures and institutional norms actively shape the nature of exchanges, and that sustained interactions over time generate more enduring and committed social ties. Within organizational contexts, Social Exchange Theory provides a framework for understanding how relationships between leaders and followers are built on foundations of mutual benefit, reciprocity, and trust (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

The theory highlights that productive organizational relationships involve not only the exchange of tangible resources such as compensation, opportunities, and material support, but also intangible resources including recognition, spiritual guidance, social support, and emotional investment (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Research in organizational settings has consistently shown that such reciprocal exchanges contribute to elevated job satisfaction, stronger organizational commitment, and improved performance outcomes (Masterson et al., 2000). In the context of registered Pentecostal churches in Kenya, Social Exchange Theory explains the relational dynamic between church leaders and congregants: leaders who provide spiritual direction, pastoral care, and meaningful engagement opportunities generate reciprocal commitments among members, who in turn invest their time, financial resources, and labour in church programs and activities (Packard & Hope, 2023). This reciprocal dynamic sustains congregational engagement and directly contributes to institutional growth, making the theory particularly applicable to the study's conceptualization of congregational engagement as a mediating variable (Ng'ang'a, 2023).

The main theoretical proposition of Social Exchange Theory concerns the role of trust as the mechanism by which social exchanges evolve from short-term, transactional interactions into enduring relational commitments (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Unlike economic exchange, in which obligations are formally specified and enforceable, social exchange operates on the basis of unspecified reciprocity, in which one party extends a benefit without a guaranteed return, and the expectation of future reciprocation is maintained through trust rather than contract (Blau, 1964).

The norm of reciprocity is regarded as a near-universal moral principle that forces individuals to return benefits received, serving as a stabilizing force in social systems by generating mutual obligations that bind parties to sustained relational engagement (Gouldner, 1960).

Critics of Social Exchange Theory have argued that it places excessive emphasis on rational economic calculation and fails to adequately account for the non-material, emotional, and moral dimensions of social relationships, which are especially salient in religious settings (Emerson, 1976). Others contend that the theory oversimplifies the complexity of human social behaviour by privileging material exchange at the expense of cultural, psychological, and spiritual dynamics (Blau, 1964). Despite these critiques, the theory retains considerable explanatory value when its core propositions about reciprocity and obligation are applied sensitively to the contextual conditions and relational norms that govern specific organizational settings (Coyle-Shapiro & Shore, 2007). Social Exchange Theory informs understanding of congregational engagement as a mediating variable, explaining how the quality of reciprocal interactions between church leaders and congregants shapes member participation and commitment, which, in turn, influences growth outcomes in registered Pentecostal churches in Kenya.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Congregational engagement in evangelical church worship programs has been investigated in the United States using a hermeneutic-phenomenological approach. Drawing on data from 19 worship leaders and 15 congregants across 39 evangelical churches, Allums (2025) explored perceptions and experiences of engagement in worship contexts. The findings identified song familiarity and melodic clarity as consistent factors that enhance congregational participation in worship, while inconsistencies in worship team planning and lead singer intonation detract from the quality of engagement. The study recommended that formal worship-leader education programs incorporate congregation-centered design principles to strengthen engagement. This study was relevant to the current research because it highlights the relational and programmatic dimensions of congregational engagement that church leaders must deliberately cultivate through intentional planning and leadership, directly supporting the present study's conceptualization of congregational engagement as a mediating variable between leadership capacity and church growth.

Pastoral leadership dimensions, including leadership quality, character, and holiness, have been found to influence the spiritual development of congregants. Evidence from a study conducted at the Alfa Omega Ketintang Baru Church in Indonesia, involving 150 church members and analyzed using linear regression, demonstrated significant relationships between these leadership dimensions and congregants' spiritual development (Purnomo et al., 2023). The findings demonstrated that improvements in pastors' leadership quality, character, and demonstrated holiness were positively associated with higher levels of spiritual growth among congregants. The study recommended that churches systematically evaluate and improve church programming, establish partnerships with mission agencies, and implement structured management systems to reinforce congregational spiritual development. This study was considered relevant to the current research because it empirically demonstrated that the quality of pastoral leadership directly shapes congregational spiritual engagement, supporting the present study's argument that leadership capacity functions as a key antecedent of congregational engagement, which in turn influences church growth.

Stakeholder involvement has been identified as an important factor in church growth in Kenya. Evidence from a cross-sectional survey conducted within the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) in Milimani South Presbytery, Nairobi, involving pastors, elders, and congregants, demonstrated the significance of stakeholders in influencing church growth (Ng'ang'a, 2023). The findings demonstrated that all three stakeholder categories, namely pastors, elders, and congregants, had statistically significant associations with church growth, thereby rejecting the null hypothesis across all dimensions. The study recommended that pastors be receptive to constructive feedback from elders and congregants to foster inclusive and participatory leadership. This study is relevant to the current research, as it provides Kenyan-contextual evidence that congregational stakeholder involvement is a significant predictor of church growth, directly reinforcing the present study's conceptualization of congregational engagement as a mediating variable linking leadership capacity to growth outcomes.

Ndambuki, Wilson and Machira (2025) investigated the relationship between authentic leadership and volunteer retention within Word of Faith Churches in Kenya, drawing on a target population of 3,757 individuals comprising regional overseers, local church pastors, and volunteer ministry leaders across 333 local churches and 28 regions. The study employed a correlational positivist design, with data collected from 336 participants through structured questionnaires incorporating the Authentic Leadership Inventory, and analyzed using multiple linear regression. The findings revealed that constructs of authentic leadership explained 47.1% of the variation in volunteer retention ($R = .686$, $R^2 = .471$, $F(4, 102) = 22.693$, $p < .001$), with leader relational transparency emerging as the single strongest predictor ($\beta = .411$, $p < .001$). The study established that congregants were significantly more likely to remain engaged and committed to their ministry roles when church leaders demonstrated openness, honest communication, and transparency in their interactions with volunteers, all of which are key dimensions of leadership capacity.

In another similar study, Ndambuki, Wilson and Machira (2025) examined the personal factors influencing volunteer retention within the same Word of Faith Church context in Kenya, applying an embedded mixed-methods research design with a sample of 330 participants. The findings demonstrated a statistically significant relationship between the personal factors examined and volunteer retention ($F(5) = 27.471$, $p < .001$), collectively accounting for 54.9% of the variance, with motivation ($\beta = .316$, $p < .01$) and socialization ($\beta = .479$, $p < .01$) emerging as the strongest and second-strongest predictors respectively. Qualitative data corroborated the quantitative results, indicating that intrinsic motivation rooted in personal values and beliefs was directly influenced by the authenticity of church leadership. The socialization dimension confirmed that congregational bonding and community belonging dimensions of congregational engagement played a pivotal role in sustaining volunteer commitment over time.

A qualitative case study by Tigah (2026) assessed the impact of Organizational Church Climate (OCC) on congregational behaviour and vitality, conducted within a single Christian denominational church in eastern Pennsylvania using a single-case exploratory design. The findings revealed five overarching themes: three addressing congregational behaviour and two addressing vitality, indicating that a welcoming, family-friendly climate characterized by Christlike leadership and spiritually nurturing environments significantly influences both congregational behaviour and organizational vitality. The study recommended that church leaders prioritize the deliberate development of a Christlike organizational climate as a foundational strategy for promoting positive congregational behaviour and sustained institutional vitality. This

study was deemed relevant to the current research because it demonstrated how leadership character and organizational climate shape congregational engagement and church health.

A study by Kioko and Wambugu (2024) investigated the effect of the ethical behaviour as an aspect of servant leadership on church growth among the Kenya Assemblies of God (KAG) in Mombasa County, Kenya. The findings revealed that ethical behaviour encompassing integrity, honesty, fairness and transparency in leadership conduct was a significant predictor of church growth, with churches whose leaders consistently demonstrated ethical decision-making registering higher membership growth, stronger congregational trust, and increased outreach. The study was considered relevant to the current research because it demonstrated empirically from a Kenyan denominational context that leadership capacity expressed through its ethical aspects both directly drives congregational engagement and is itself defined by the regulatory and governance environment within which church leaders operate.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Philosophy and Design

This study adopted a positivist research philosophy because it was consistent with the objective of testing a null hypothesis and examining the mediating effect of congregational engagement on the relationship between leadership capacity and the growth of registered Pentecostal churches in Kenya. The positivist philosophy prioritizes empirically based data and objective measurement, which are necessary for assessing the nature, direction, and magnitude of the relationships among the identified variables (Creswell & Poth, 2022). The study employed a cross-sectional survey research design, which was selected due to its ability to enable the researcher to collect data from a large and geographically dispersed population at a single point in time, making it well-suited for examining the mediation relationships among variables across the 33 registered Pentecostal churches in Kenya (Creswell, 2014).

Target Population and Sampling

The target population for this study comprised the 33 registered Pentecostal churches affiliated with the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) and registered under the Societies Act (Cap. 108). The unit of observation comprised bishops, assistant bishops, pastors and church elders who were directly involved in strategic leadership, spiritual governance and congregational administration. From each of the 33 registered Pentecostal churches, one bishop, assistant bishop, or senior pastor who represented the highest level of executive leadership were included. Additionally, 20 church elders per church were included as the primary governance and advisory layer, yielding a target population of 693 respondents. For the category of bishops, assistant bishops and pastors, a census approach was adopted. For the church elders' category, simple random sampling was used. The Yamane (1967) formula was applied to determine the required sample size from the elder population of 660, at a margin of error of 5 percent, yielding 249 church elders. Combined with the 33 senior leaders selected through the census approach, the study's total sample size was 282 respondents.

Data Collection and Instruments

Primary data was collected using structured, self-administered questionnaires. All items used a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). A pilot study involving 28 respondents from the International Christian Centre, Nairobi, was conducted to assess instrument validity and reliability prior to main data collection. Reliability analysis showed that

leadership capacity recorded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.802, congregational engagement 0.789, and church growth 0.804, all exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating high internal consistency across the measurement scales. Construct validity was assessed using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, with all variables yielding KMO values above 0.5 and Bartlett's significance values of 0.000.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 29.0. Descriptive statistics including means and standard deviations were computed for all study variables. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to determine the strength and direction of bivariate associations. To test the mediating effect of congregational engagement, a four-step regression-based mediation approach following Baron and Kenny (1986) was applied. The mediation models were as shown hereby:

$$\text{Step 1: } G = \beta_0 + \beta LC + \varepsilon$$

$$\text{Step 2: } CE = \beta_0 + \beta LC + \varepsilon$$

$$\text{Step 3: } G = \beta_0 + \beta CE + \varepsilon$$

$$\text{Step 4: } G = \beta_0 + \beta_1 LC + \beta_2 CE + \varepsilon$$

Where G = Growth of registered Pentecostal churches, LC = Leadership Capacity, CE = Congregational Engagement, β_0 = intercept, and ε = error term. Full mediation is concluded if LC becomes statistically non-significant in Step 4 while CE remains significant. Partial mediation is concluded when LC remains statistically significant in Step 4 but its coefficient is reduced compared to Step 1.

RESULTS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Of the 282 questionnaires administered, 259 were duly completed and returned, yielding a response rate of 91.8 percent. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) and Kothari (2004), a response rate above 50 percent is adequate for cross-sectional studies, whereas Babbie (2004) considers a return rate above 70 percent very good. This high participation rate indicates strong representativeness of the target population of registered Pentecostal churches in Kenya.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the characteristics of the study variables across the 259 valid respondents. Measures of central tendency and dispersion were adopted, including the mean, standard deviation and mode.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Congregational Engagement

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mode
Active Participation in Church Programs	259	4.12	0.69	5
Community Outreach Involvement	259	3.93	0.96	5
Support for Church Activities	259	3.78	0.87	5
Volunteerism in Ministry	259	3.67	0.92	5
Overall Congregational Engagement	259	3.85	0.81	5

Source: Research Data (2026)

The descriptive results on congregational engagement yielded an aggregate mean of 3.85 (SD = 0.81) across the 259 respondents, which falls within the high-agreement range on the five-point scale. Among the four sub-constructs, active participation in church programs recorded the highest aggregate mean of 4.12, while volunteerism in ministry recorded the lowest, at 3.67. Regarding active participation in church programs, the sub-construct recorded an aggregate mean of 4.12 (SD = 0.69), reflecting a high level of agreement among respondents. The statement "Members regularly attend church-organized meetings" recorded the highest mean score of 4.35 (SD = 0.85, mode = 5), indicating that this was the most strongly supported aspect of active participation in church programs among the 259 respondents. The statement "Members show commitment to church programs" recorded the lowest mean score of 3.92 (SD = 1.20, mode = 5), suggesting comparatively less consensus or weaker performance in this area.

Regarding community outreach involvement, the sub-construct recorded an aggregate mean of 3.93 (SD = 0.96), reflecting a high level of agreement among respondents. Regarding support for church activities, the sub-construct recorded an aggregate mean of 3.78 (SD = 0.87), reflecting a high level of agreement among respondents. Regarding volunteerism in ministry, the sub-construct recorded an aggregate mean of 3.67 (SD = 0.92), indicating high level of agreement among respondents. The statement "Members dedicate time to serve in church programs" recorded the lowest mean score of 3.50 (SD = 1.22, mode = 4), indicating weaker performance. These findings suggest that, overall, respondents perceived a high level of congregational engagement within their respective churches, although some variation across its constituent dimensions was observed. Congregational engagement in Kenyan Pentecostal churches is currently uneven across its constituent dimensions, with active participation in structured church programmes considerably stronger than sustained volunteerism in ministry.

Correlation Analysis

To examine the bivariate associations among the study variables, a Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis was conducted using SPSS. The correlations were tested at the 0.01 level of significance (2-tailed). Table 2 presents the correlation results.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix

Variables	Growth	Leadership Capacity	Congregational Engagement
Growth	1.000		
Leadership Capacity	0.677**	1.000	
Congregational Engagement	0.726**	0.624**	1.000
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000

***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Source: Research Data (2026)*

The results show a strong positive and statistically significant correlation ($r = 0.677$, $p < .01$) between leadership capacity and the growth of registered Pentecostal churches in Kenya. Similarly, congregational engagement shows a strong, positive, and significant association with church growth ($r = 0.726$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that churches whose members actively participate in church programmes, engage in community outreach, support church activities, and volunteer in ministry tend to record higher levels of growth. The findings further show that leadership capacity correlates positively and significantly with congregational engagement ($r = 0.624$, $p < 0.01$). These strong positive correlations suggest that leadership capacity, congregational engagement, and church growth are meaningfully interrelated, providing preliminary support for the hypothesized mediation pathway.

Diagnostic Tests

Before fitting the regression model, diagnostic tests were carried out to ensure that the assumptions of the Classical Linear Regression Model (CLRM) were not violated. The results of the Shapiro–Wilk test for normality indicated that p-values for all study variables exceeded the 0.05 threshold: leadership capacity ($W = 0.875$, $p = 0.089$), congregational engagement ($W = 0.920$, $p = 0.105$), and growth ($W = 0.894$, $p = 0.201$), leading to non-rejection of the null hypothesis of normality for each variable. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for all predictor variables were well below 10, with congregational engagement recording a VIF of 2.346 and a tolerance value of 0.426, confirming the absence of problematic multicollinearity. The Breusch–Pagan test for heteroscedasticity produced an LM statistic of 14.933 with a p-value of 0.089, which exceeded the 0.05 significance level, confirming homoscedasticity. Scatter plot inspection confirmed reasonably linear relationships between all predictor variables and growth.

H₀: There is no statistically significant mediating effect of congregational engagement on the relationship between leadership capacity and the growth of registered Pentecostal churches in Kenya.

To examine the mediating role of congregational engagement in the relationship between leadership capacity and the growth of registered Pentecostal churches, a four-step regression-based mediation approach, following Baron and Kenny (1986), was applied. This procedure allows for assessing whether congregational engagement serves as an explanatory mechanism through which leadership capacity affects church growth. The results from these four regression models are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Model Summary for Mediation Pathway

Model	Predictors	R	R Square	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error
1	Leadership Capacity → Growth	0.677	0.458	0.456	0.58504
2	Leadership Capacity → Congregational Engagement	0.624	0.390	0.387	0.63396
3	Congregational Engagement → Growth	0.726	0.527	0.525	0.54662
4	Leadership Capacity + Congregational Engagement → Growth	0.780	0.609	0.606	0.49796

Source: Research Data (2026)

The results shown in Table 3 support the presence of a mediating effect. In Model 1, leadership capacity alone accounted for 45.8 percent of the variation in the growth of registered Pentecostal churches ($R^2 = 0.458$), indicating a strong direct relationship between leadership capacity and church growth. In Model 2, leadership capacity significantly predicted congregational engagement, accounting for 39.0 percent of the variation in congregational engagement ($R^2 = 0.390$). This suggests that variations in congregational engagement can, to a considerable degree, be attributed to the leadership capacity exhibited by bishops, pastors, and elders within the churches. In Model 3, congregational engagement alone explained 52.7 percent of the variation in growth ($R^2 = 0.527$), supporting the idea that congregational engagement is itself a strong predictor of church growth. Finally, in Model 4, when both leadership capacity and congregational engagement were included as predictors, the R^2 increased to 0.609, indicating that 60.9 percent of the variation in church growth was jointly explained by leadership capacity and congregational engagement. The increase in explanatory power from Model 1 ($R^2 = 0.458$) to Model 4 ($R^2 =$

0.609) shows that the addition of congregational engagement improves the model, confirming a mediating effect.

Table 4: ANOVA for Mediation Pathway

Model	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	74.394	1	74.394	217.36	0.000
1	Residual	87.963	257	0.342		
2	Regression	65.970	1	65.970	164.14	0.000
2	Residual	103.289	257	0.402		
3	Regression	85.567	1	85.567	286.37	0.000
3	Residual	76.790	257	0.299		
4	Regression	98.880	2	49.440	199.39	0.000
4	Residual	63.478	256	0.248		

Source: Research Data (2026)

As shown in Table 4, all four regression models are statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level, indicating that the predictors in each model account for a significant proportion of the variance in the dependent variable. Model 1 (leadership capacity predicting growth) yielded an F-statistic of 217.36, demonstrating a strong direct influence of leadership capacity on church growth. Model 2 indicates a significant relationship between leadership capacity and congregational engagement ($F = 164.14$), while Model 3 confirms that congregational engagement significantly influences growth ($F = 286.37$). Moreover, Model 4, which incorporates both leadership capacity and congregational engagement as predictors, remains highly significant with an F-statistic of 199.39. The consistently high F-values across all models support the statistical validity of the hypothesized relationships and provide empirical support for the presence of a mediation effect.

Table 5: Regression Coefficients for Mediation Models

Model	Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.510	0.225	-	6.717	0.000
1	Leadership Capacity	0.615	0.054	0.677	11.444	0.000
2	(Constant)	1.564	0.184	-	8.517	0.000
2	Leadership Capacity → CE	0.580	0.047	0.624	12.303	0.000
3	(Constant)	1.201	0.264	-	4.558	0.000
3	Congregational Engagement → Growth	0.711	0.063	0.726	11.233	0.000
4	(Constant)	0.749	0.241	-	3.110	0.002
4	Leadership Capacity (direct path)	0.333	0.053	0.367	6.232	0.000
4	Congregational Engagement (mediator)	0.487	0.065	0.497	7.443	0.000

Source: Research Data (2026)

In Model 1, leadership capacity significantly predicted church growth with a beta coefficient of 0.615 ($p = 0.000$), indicating a strong direct effect (Step 1 of the Baron and Kenny procedure satisfied: the independent variable significantly predicts the dependent variable). Model 2 showed that leadership capacity also significantly influenced congregational engagement ($B = 0.580$, $p = 0.000$), fulfilling the second condition for mediation (the independent variable significantly predicts the mediator). In Model 3, congregational engagement significantly predicted church

growth ($B = 0.711$, $p = 0.000$), satisfying the third condition (the mediator significantly predicts the dependent variable, controlling for the independent variable where applicable). In Model 4, both leadership capacity and congregational engagement were included as predictors of growth. Both remained statistically significant, with beta coefficients of 0.333 for leadership capacity ($p = 0.000$) and 0.487 for congregational engagement ($p = 0.000$). However, the coefficient for leadership capacity decreased from 0.615 (in Model 1) to 0.333 (in Model 4), a reduction of 0.282 units, indicating that a significant portion of leadership capacity's influence on growth is transmitted indirectly through congregational engagement.

The indirect effect of leadership capacity on growth through congregational engagement is estimated at 0.282 (the difference between the total effect of 0.615 in Model 1 and the direct effect of 0.333 in Model 4), representing approximately 45.9 percent of the total effect of leadership capacity on church growth. Because the direct effect of leadership capacity on growth remained statistically significant even after controlling for congregational engagement ($B = 0.333$, $p = 0.000$), the observed mediation is best characterized as partial rather than full. This implies that congregational engagement partially explains how leadership capacity translates into church growth, while leadership capacity also continues to have a direct and independent influence on growth outcomes that is not channeled through congregational engagement.

These findings confirm the presence of a statistically significant partial mediation effect. Congregational engagement partially explains how leadership capacity influences the growth of registered Pentecostal churches in Kenya. This implies that while effective leadership directly improves institutional growth outcomes, its influence is further strengthened when it simultaneously mobilizes members to actively participate, engage in community outreach, provide resources, and volunteer. These results highlight the value of an integrated pastoral approach that combines strong, visionary leadership with deliberate strategies for congregational mobilization to optimize growth in registered Pentecostal churches.

Based on these results, the null hypothesis (H_0), which stated that there is no statistically significant mediating effect of congregational engagement on the relationship between leadership capacity and the growth of registered Pentecostal churches in Kenya, is rejected. The findings support the alternative hypothesis, indicating that congregational engagement partially mediates the relationship between leadership capacity and church growth. This implies that leadership capacity not only directly influences church growth but also indirectly enhances growth by promoting active member engagement within the church.

CONCLUSION

The objective focused on examining the mediating role of congregational engagement in the relationship between leadership capacity and church growth. Results revealed a partial mediation effect, showing that congregational engagement enhances the positive influence of leadership capacity on growth outcomes, thereby achieving this objective. The study therefore concludes that leadership capacity does not translate into church growth through a single, direct channel alone, but through its capacity to activate and sustain congregational engagement. The reduction in the direct effect of leadership capacity once congregational engagement was introduced into the model, alongside an indirect effect representing approximately 45.9 percent of the total effect, demonstrates that member mobilization is not a peripheral by-product of good leadership but a central mechanism through which that leadership becomes institutionally productive.

In addition, church growth in the Pentecostal context is fundamentally a participatory, collective achievement rather than the outcome of top-down pastoral authority alone; leaders who successfully cast vision and make sound decisions achieve growth in large part because these practices simultaneously draw congregants into active participation, outreach, giving of resources, and volunteer service. Certain growth-enhancing effects of leadership, such as the legitimacy a well-led church commands in its community, the confidence it inspires among prospective members, or the institutional stability that clear strategic decision-making provides, operate through channels other than congregational participation. Therefore, church leaders seeking to maximize growth cannot rely solely on strategies that increase member activity; they must also invest in the direct, non-participatory dimensions of leadership, such as reputational credibility and sound governance, which continue to influence growth independently of how engaged the congregation becomes.

Congregational engagement in Kenyan Pentecostal churches is currently uneven across its constituent dimensions, with active participation in structured church programmes considerably stronger than sustained volunteerism in ministry. This pattern suggests that congregants are more willing to show up and take part in organized activities than to commit ongoing personal time and service to ministry work, a distinction with direct implications for growth strategy. Given that congregational engagement was shown to be a strong predictor of growth in its own right, explaining over half of the variance in growth when considered alone, this suggests that closing this gap between passive participation and active volunteerism represents one of the more promising levers available to Pentecostal church leadership for accelerating institutional growth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study found that congregational engagement significantly contributed to church growth and mediated the relationship between leadership capacity and church growth. Denominational leadership should therefore establish policies that provide structured opportunities for congregants to participate in church activities and decision-making. Churches should support the forms of congregational engagement measured in the study through clear ministry participation channels, organized outreach activities, volunteer involvement, member feedback mechanisms, and opportunities for congregants to contribute to church programmes. This recommendation follows from the finding that leadership capacity contributes to growth partly through its ability to generate active congregational engagement. Consequently, leadership policies should not focus exclusively on promoting individual leaders but should also require leaders to translate their capacities into proper opportunities for congregational participation.

Furthermore, the Registrar of Societies, NCKK and denominational governing bodies should review regulatory and administrative requirements that may constrain the positive contribution of congregational engagement to church growth. Compliance procedures relating to registration, reporting, financial accountability and governance should therefore be made clear, proportionate, and administratively manageable without weakening accountability requirements. Particular attention should be given to reducing unnecessary procedural burdens that may divert church leaders and congregational volunteers from ministry, outreach, and other engagement activities.

The study further recommends that registered Pentecostal churches in Kenya strengthen their congregational mobilization structures to support growth. Church leaders should conduct regular engagement assessments, such as member satisfaction surveys and focus group discussions, to identify gaps and areas for improvement in participation. Based on these assessments, leaders

should implement targeted interventions, including establishing clear volunteer coordination systems, promoting collaborative outreach through small-group ministry models, and recognizing outstanding contributions from congregants. Training programmes should be provided to align member involvement with the church's growth objectives, emphasizing values such as active participation, generosity, and service. Church leaders must lead by example, consistently modeling the engagement values they aim to instill across their congregations.

The study recommends an integrated approach that aligns leadership practices, congregational mobilization and regulatory compliance to drive growth in registered Pentecostal churches. Church leaders should thus create strategic plans that articulate how leadership and engagement intersect to improve growth outcomes. These plans should outline measurable objectives and assign coordinated teams to implement and monitor progress. Regular performance reviews should evaluate metrics such as membership growth, spiritual vitality, and outreach impact, alongside indicators of congregational engagement strength. By fostering knowledge sharing and continuous improvement, churches can develop cohesive strategies that enhance their growth and ministry effectiveness.

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