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The role of perceptions of empowerment and supervisory support on religious women's performance in Tanzania

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Abstract
This study examined the relationship between perceptions of empowerment among religious women and their overall performance in Tanzania. Specifically, the study explored how women religious perceive empowerment and supervisory support and their impact on performance. The main research questions were to what extent do women religious feel that they are empowered and how does greater sense of empowerment affect their overall performance? The study consisted of a descriptive survey among religious women working or studying in five higher learning institutions in Tanzania. In total, 300 questionnaires were distributed to targeted nuns. The response rate was 35% which meant that one in three targeted nuns responded to the survey. Overall, correlation results suggest that a greater sense of being empowered is positively related to perceived supervisory support and overall performance as hypothesized. On the other hand, regression analysis results showed that empowerment and supervisory support as independent variables explained variance in overall performance as hypothesized. The study concludes with a discussion on theoretical and practical implications related to people's understanding of the issues and challenges that African religious women face in the process of increasing their workforce's capacity and the ways they use in coping with the challenges.
Keywords: Empowerment, religious women, supervisory support, overall performance

1.1 Background

The idea of empowering a person has been taken both positively and negatively by various people from various walks of life. According to Marquet (2012)

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empowerment brings paradoxical sentiments when one considers who has to empower the other and what happens after the empowerment. Marquet also challenges the traditional literature which for quite sometimes has regarded empowerment as being related to a leader-follower approach in managing organizations. Marquet calls for a leader-leader role in empowering any person in any organization or walk of life. According to him, everyone has to be a leader of his/her own life and workplace to be able to be creative and innovative members of their community or organization. Yet, despite this challenge on whether it is correct to speak of empowering women as if they have no way to lead themselves, it is quite clear that the world sees women being subjected to suppressive laws and environment which make them vulnerable to many things such as unequal treatment in job opportunities. In the UN Sustainable Development Goals, empowerment of women and gender equity are referred to as part of the millennium challenges in the goals of rescuing the continent of Africa from poverty and other woes which beset the continent. It is likewise stated in the Tanzania Development Vision 2025 that the aim of the vision is to make Tanzania a nation imbued with high quality livelihood, peace, stability, unity, and good governance, a well-educated and learning society. Further the Tanzania Development Vision envisions a nation with a competitive economy capable of producing sustainable growth and shared benefits. It is therefore, time to question whether the terms and qualifications which are made in reference to women development make sense in our contemporary world.

In the agenda for women development in the world, non-governmental organizations such as Vital Voices have established programs to support women by unleashing their leadership potential. In their website, Vital Voices explains what they do for women, "We search the world for a woman leader with a daring vision. Then we partner with her to make that vision a reality. Through long-term investments that expand her skills, connections and visibility, we accelerate her efforts, improving the world for us all" (https://www.vitalvoices.org/who-we-are/paragraph1). There are many such organizations which are meant to build capacity of women in various ways and for different purposes. In Africa, religious women have a high chance and role in changing their lives and changing people's lives. Different organizations such as the African Sisters Education Collaborative (ASEC) have been established with programs designed to support religious women in education initiatives. For example, ASEC's mission explains the scope of such initiatives as provided below:

> To contribute significantly to increased access to education in Africa by helping to educate women religious and enabling them to acquire necessary credentials for teaching, healthcare, spiritual, or social service ministries in their countries. ASEC outreach currently extends to six sub-Saharan countries: Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, Nigeria and Ghana. ASEC believes that capacity-building, creative use of technology, and training and educational programs are effective pathways for responding to the educational needs of African Sisters (www.asec-sldi.org).

The impact of such initiatives includes allowing sisters to participate in various programs where colleagues and co-workers are mentored and also included in different types of training workshops. The impact of such training is expected to be felt by religious women in their ministries, and surrounding communities and their countries at large. ASEC for example, has established a program "The Higher Education for Sisters in Africa (HESA) which is committed to empowering African girls and women to become responsible leaders and citizens in their communities and in society (www.asec-sldi.org). Educating sisters is one aspect of empowering women since increasing access to higher education for women in Africa is still wanting.

It is also important to research religious women's attitudes towards their empowering agents, i.e., those who are in supervisory positions. Empowering agents also include their religious congregations, higher education institutions where they are sent for training, the dioceses where their congregations are located, family and other people of good will who support them in their academic journey. The purpose of this research was to examine the role of empowerment among religious women in Tanzania with a specific focus on how they perceive supervisory support in the relationship between empowerment and overall performance. For some years, researchers have developed paradigms which take individuals to be the primary unit of psychological analysis, forgetting that individual's attributes are affected by the groups to which they belong (Haslam, 2001). In this regard, the study of religious women is more than a study of individuals as they are individuals; rather it is a study of individuals as they exist in their social identities. 'Religious women' is a social identity group or social identity category.

The contribution of this research includes allowing for an enhanced understanding of the issues and challenges that African religious women face in the process of increasing their workforce's capacity and the ways they use in

coping with the challenges. The study uses social identity theory as a lens to explaining how religious women come to be a social group which is unique in the workforce compared to others.

1.2 Study objectives

The main research objective was to assess the extent to which religious women are empowered in order to fill skills gap in Africa.
Specific objectives include:
(i) To assess religious women's sense of empowerment
(ii) To find out the role of supervisory support in religious women empowerment
(ii) To examine the relationship between religious women' perceptions of empowerment and their overall performance

1.3 Research questions

(i) To what extent do religious women perceive that they are empowered?
(ii) Does greater sense of empowerment affect religious women's overall performance?

1.4 Justification of the study

Women religious form a specific group of people who cannot be excluded from socio-political and religious interests when the issue of empowerment is discussed for good or for bad reasons. This assertion is made possible by the emerging servant-leadership model across cultures where religious people can be considered to be in a servant-leadership altruistic approach of leadership that focuses on the commitment to serve other people (Pekerti and Sendjaya, 2010). It is not the intention of the researchers to expose the extent to which women religious are either empowered or not empowered. The intention is to study 'how' religious women as members of religious institutions (who have their own voices) succeed in overcoming challenges of empowering their workforce amid forces and demands for bridging skills gap in the region.

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1.5. Rationale for the study

Religious orientation and religious beliefs shape people's personality, behavior, ethical sensitivity, moral character, and value systems of individuals to varying degrees (Fernando and Jackson, 2006; King, Bell, and Lawrence, 2009; Pekerti and Sendjaya, 2010). As a specific group of people, a study of religious women empowerment is reasonable and important due to the nature of religious life they choose and the nature of the religious congregations they are identified to. In this regard, attitude to empowerment in the job, perceptions on supervisory support and overall performance form the main concepts which highlight the extent to which women religious as individuals and as a corporate body measure in the personal development goals.

It is good to note that studies on skills gap in East Africa indicate that when the local talents return to their workplaces after training, whether they are trained in the country or outside the country, they not only do a better job, but also serve as encouragement among staff, they transfer the skills they have learnt to their colleagues and show high level of corporate pride (Bagalwadi, 2015: 439). That is why, reference to Pope Paul VI's exhortations are important and should be applied to foster Africa's development agenda. His exhortations reflect the role of Catholic Church and its institutions such as Universities in advancing the call for political, economic and social justice, fairness and equality among their citizens. Pope Paul VI further instructed that those who are the target for empowerment (students) have to be aware of their responsibility towards those who are suffering physically and spiritually. This responsibility begins with the academic community (Evangelii Nuntiandi, nn. 18ff, AAS 68, 1976: 17-18). In this regard, development of Africa cannot be reached by excluding the educated community. In order to achieve sustainable and millennium development goals, everyone (men and women) should be involved in the empowerment process (Fukuda-Parr and Sakiko, 2004).

2. Review of literature

This study is guided by the social identity theory which was propounded by Mead (1934) and Turner and Tajfel (1986). It explains the process by which individuals identify with particular groups (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). Furthermore, social identity theory suggests that individuals recognize their own membership in groups by defining the social boundaries surrounding particular groups, and then self-categorizing themselves as either belonging or not

belonging to them. As individuals begin to identify with a particular group, they are able to answer the question, 'who am I?' with a clear response, 'I am part of this group.' This process of identification is well practiced in religious life. In clarifying congregation houses as one kind of group, Ashforth and Mael's (1989) work made social identity theory accessible to management researchers and provided practical implications of the theory to organizational behavior phenomena.

According to Stets and Burke (2000), Social Identity Theory, is a person's knowledge that he/she belongs to a social category or group. A social group is a set of individuals who hold a common social identification or view themselves as members of the same social category. Through a social comparison process, persons who are similar to the self are categorized with the self and are labeled the in-group; persons who differ from the self are categorized as the out-group. In early work, social identity included the emotional, evaluative, and other psychological correlates of in group classification. Later researchers often separated the self-categorization component from the self-esteem (evaluative) and commitment (psychological) components in order to empirically investigate the relationships among them.

The two important processes involved in social identity formation, namely self-categorization and social comparison, produce different consequences (Hogg and Abrams, 1988). The consequence of self-categorization is an accentuation of the perceived similarities between the self and other in-group members, and an accentuation of the perceived differences between the self and out group members. This accentuation occurs for all the attitudes, beliefs and values, affective reactions, behavioral norms, styles of speech, and other properties that are believed to be correlated with the relevant intergroup categorization. The consequence of the social comparison process is the selective application of the accentuation effect, primarily to those dimensions that will result in self-enhancing outcomes for the self. Specifically, one's self-esteem is enhanced by evaluating the in-group and the out-group on dimensions that lead the in-group to be judged positively and the out-group to be judged negatively.

Hogg and Abrams (1988) delineate that, the social categories in which individuals place themselves are parts of a structured society and exist only in relation to other contrasting categories (for example, black vs. white); each has more or less power, prestige, status, and so on. Furthermore, these authors point out that the social categories precede individuals; individuals are born into an already structured society. Once in a society, people derive their identity or

sense of self largely from the social categories to which they belong. Each person, however, over the course of his or her personal history, is a member of a unique combination of social categories; therefore the set of social identities making up that person's self-concept is unique.

We can conceptualize a group, in this sense, as a collection of individuals who perceive themselves to be members of the same social category, share some emotional involvement in this common definition of themselves, and achieve some degree of social consensus about the evaluation of their group and of their membership in it. Social categorizations are conceived here as cognitive tools that segment, classify, and order the social environment, and thus enable the individual to undertake many forms of social action. But they do not merely systematize the social world; they also provide a system of orientation for self-reference: they create and define the individual's place in society. Social groups understood in this sense, provide their members with an identification of themselves in social terms. These identifications are to a very large extent relational and comparative: they define the individual as similar to or different from, as 'better' or 'worse' than, members of other groups. Religious women by and large form a social group which bears much of the features discussed above. In the process of self-identification and self-categorization, as a group, religious women face theoretical and practical questions which need answers in terms of the extent to which their perceptions of themselves affect their identity and their overall performance.

Our broader theoretical approach in this research is inspired by how women employ religious doctrinal organizational tools in their struggle for self-determination, equity, equality and advancement. This literature attempts to show how women when empowered can transform their lives and the lives of those they serve as leaders. In other words, religious women have the capacity to use available resources and interpret religious goals to enable and promote themselves as agents of women's voice and empowerment (Agadjanian, 2015).

The idea of women's entry into leadership positions was historically more common in non-mainstream religious movements, such as Quakerism, Shakerism, Spiritualism, Christian Science, and Theosopy which are typically characterized by deemphasizing a masculine deity and the doctrine of the Fall, denial of the need for formally ordained clergy, and asserting women's roles outside the sphere of marriage and mother-hood (Larson, 1999; Plant, 2003). During the age of Augustus (30 B.C - A.D.14), for example, Roman women had a share in domestic and public religion. They were given special attention besides their main role in the process of procreation. In the beginning,

aristocratic women were not included in all their husbands' activities except accompanying them to public entertainment. The kind of education women got with rare exceptions lacked the training for public life that their brothers needed. They were allowed to read lighter types of literature, sing and dance. Later in the age, they got political and religious recognition. Mark Anthony (40-39 B.C), for example, even put the heads of his two wives Fulvia and Octavia on some issues. Women's rights and freedom of choice were also recognized by jury and other political entities when it came to family life and community issues at large. For example, in some cases, women could decide on whom to marry or divorce when it was necessary to do so. Some classes gave women some choice of lifestyles, including sexual liberation. In short, there was some sense of empowerment among women during the time of Augustus (Treggiari, 2005). Even though Augustus enacted some repressive laws for women in Rome's history and excluded his own women from his reign, he however, had four exceptional women who exerted a great impact on Rome than would have Augustus ever imagined possible. Cleopatra, Livia, his sister Octavia, and his daughter Julia played a great role in his personal life and that of Rome (Kleiner, 2005: 199).

In contemporary Pentecostal churches, despite these churches' generally conservative, patriarchal theological and social narratives, women often rise to positions of considerable influence and authority through charisma invigorated by God's calling, especially in churches with no fixed ordination rules (Lawless, 1993). On the other hand, the Roman Catholic Church has historically banned ordination of women as priests and this ban has persisted despite a growing critique from both within and outside that denomination. Yet even the Catholic Church has seen dramatic expansion of laywomen ministry (Ecklund, 2006; Flinn, 1996). Catholic women's rise as de facto congregation leaders has become possible in part due to an increasing shortage of priests (Wallace, 1992). It is important therefore, to note that the role of women in the socio-cultural context is broad and should not be overemphasized. We are all aware that many of the well-known and admired African leaders are women. The examples include Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Leymah Gboweee, Wangara Maathai, and Mamphela Rampele (Reid, Roumpi and O'Leary-Kelly, 2015: 265). According to Agadjanian (2015), Western scholarship on religion and gender has devoted considerable attention to women's entry into leadership roles across various religious traditions and denominations. Nevertheless, little is known about the dynamics of Catholic women' religious authority and leadership in developing

settings, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, a region of powerful and diverse religious expressions.

When Pope Paul VI visited Africa for the first time, like St. Paul, his visit to Africa echoed these words: 'Come to our aid. Now is the time. Do not delay, for we are ready to receive you' (Acts 16:9). When he was in Uganda he said: "Our prayers today rise to God that Africa may flower forth with all the riches of its culture and noble traditions, advancing with ever longer strides upon the road of progress, 'Attracted to adopt new ways of life, introduced by science and technology' (Entebbe International Airport Thursday, 31 July 1969, Africae Terrarum, No. 13)." His messages, doctrines and exhortations show his solidarity with the poor - Africa. In 1960's Africa, some states were still struggling to extend access to secondary and higher education since colonial powers still placed boundaries and limitations in their subjects' access to secondary education (Nugent, 2004: 15). This scenario did not exclude the view that most of the religious organizations if not all were and are still in dire need of filling in the skills gaps among its members. The skills gaps have been enlarged by the effect of science and technology, but also by globalization.

Using the social identity perspective and a survey among religious women in Tanzania, this research analyzes religious women's perceptions on issues which are related to self-development and acquisition of necessary qualifications to entry into religious leadership, positions of power and influence in the broader societal changes that promote this entry. It is quite clear from ordinary practices in the many religious congregations in Tanzania that religious superiors plus the local ordinaries in the respective dioceses, have been identifying skills gap among their members. The identification of skills gaps among religious women which need to be bridged has necessitated the congregations and the Catholic Church in Tanzania to invest in educating and training the religious women in various programs and educational levels. Higher education institutions form one of the levels of training that the Catholic Church in Tanzania has identified to positively contribute to the empowerment process of the religious members. The aim of educating and training the women religious has always been to nurture them so that after their studies they should be able to return to their congregations, do a better job, be of right attitude to performance and thus transform the society at whatever level they are involved as a Church workforce. In this regard, this study is set to establish the extent to which religious women perceive the support which they are accorded by their religious superiors in the process of their empowerment. The study therefore hypothesizes that:

H1: There is a relationship between empowerment and overall performance.
H2: There is a relationship between empowerment and perceived supervisory support.

According to Raub and Robert (2010), empowerment can have a significant impact on many organizational contexts. Empowerment is associated with leadership effectiveness and efficiency, job satisfaction, creativity, team performance, and negatively related to strain and turnover intentions. Pope Paul VI's efforts to achieve literacy in Africa and outside Africa in the late 1960s were rooted in his firm belief that "an illiterate is a person with an undernourished mind" (Populorum Progressio, Number 35). He further suggests that one needs knowledge to recover confidence and be of service to the human development process. Empowerment is therefore about regaining confidence and being passionate of what one is doing in the development process. Empowerment should prepare people to face challenges that exceed their current skills. Empowerment entails one being prepared to do things which one has not yet been able to do (Duckworth, 2016).

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample and sampling procedures

This paper is based on data collected through a survey of religious women working and/or studying in five Catholic higher learning institutions in Tanzania. Since the target group was specific in terms of the number of religious women in each college, 300 questionnaires were sent and distributed to religious women respondents. We requested (by phone calls and emails) the Principals and Directors of the Colleges to facilitate the distribution of the questionnaires to religious women who were either working or studying in the colleges. It was important to involve the principals and directors since they had to permit the religious women (students and staff members) to participate in the study. The principals and directors were however not involved in the completion of questionnaires. This request for facilitation was followed up by emails and telephone calls to the colleges after one week to confirm that the questionnaires were distributed to the targeted respondents. After three weeks, we asked the leaders/heads of religious women in the colleges to collect the questionnaires. Out of 300 questionnaires which were distributed, 104 usable questionnaires were returned. With this number we had a response rate of 35% which is

acceptable as sample representatives in this type of study. In this regard, one out of three religious women completed the questionnaire. There was no threat of non-response bias which occurs whenever a significant number of targeted population fail to respond (Moser and Kalton, 2004; Ostroff, Kinicki and Clark, 2002). In this regard, the researchers did not carry out a test for non-response bias which would estimate the effects on non-response error (Armstrong and Everton, 1977; Moser and Kalton, 2004).

Of the sample, 58% had attained high school education, 28% had attained a BA or BSc degree, and 12% had MA or MSc. Degree. Six percent had attained a PhD degree. Table 1 below provides the frequencies for age distribution of the sample.

Table 1: Frequencies for Age Distribution

Age Group (years)	Frequency	Percent
18-25	4	4
26 -35	30	31
36 - 45	43	44
46-55	17	17
Above 55	4	4
Total	98	100

In terms of work experience while 26% stated that they have no work experience, 74% stated that they had work experience before their current workplace. In the same manner, 44% of the respondents stated that they had work experience in full time position for a period of between one to six years. On the other hand, 26% had full time working experience of between 7 to 12 years. 30% of the sample reported that they had full time work experience of more than 13 years. In terms of part time working experience, 80% stated that they worked as part timers between one to six years.

In terms of the nature of their jobs, out of the sample, 7% identified themselves of working or having worked on clerical duties, 10% work on supervisory positions, 7% managerial positions and 59% were on either technical or professionals jobs. 17% worked on other job aspects different from the above. On the sample, 90% of the respondents reported that they work in a team.

3.2 Data analysis procedures

After data input in the SPSS package, we employed Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) as a data reduction strategy. The main analytical procedures that were employed in this study include correlation and multiple regression analysis (Ordinary Least Squares, OLS).

3.3 Measures

3.3.1 Empowerment at work

Empowerment was measured adapting 'Empowerment at Work Scale' developed by Spreitzer (1995) and extracted from Fields (2002: 113). The measure describes the extent to which employees believe they are empowered in their jobs. According to Spreitzer (1995) empowerment results from four cognitions which reflect an individual's orientation to his or her work role. These four cognitions related to meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. The measure asked respondents to indicate the extent to which they are empowered in terms of meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. Items for the measure included such statements like, "The work I do is very important to me," and "I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work." The measure was put in a 7-point Likert type scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree.

When an exploratory principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation was conducted, it yielded four factors with initial eigenvalues greater than 1. The Total Variance Explained was 70.4%. The four factors extracted correspond to the nature of the original measure. The original measure assesses four areas of empowerment. Thus in this study, meaning (alpha .75), competence (alpha .76), self-determination (alpha .68) and impact (alpha .74) were established. Consistent with the original scale, the four factors/dimensions were combined to form the measure of empowerment at work. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the measure was .83. Table 3 below provides details for factor on the empowerment measure.

Table 3: Factor Loadings: Empowerment at Work Scale

Items	1	2	3	4
I am confident about my ability to do my job	.81			
I am self-assured about my capabilities to perform my work activities	.80			
I have mastered the skills necessary for my job	.71			
The work I do is meaningful to me		.91		
My job activities are personally meaningful to me		.78		
The work I do is very important to me		.75		
I have considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do my job			.80	
I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work			.77	
I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job			.76	
I have significant influence over what happens in my religious congregation				.8
I have a great deal of control over what happens in my religious house				.7
My impact in what happens in my religious house is large				.5

3.3.2 Supervisory support

Supervisory support was measured by adopting Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Wormley (1990) 9 item measure which assesses employee perceptions of the extent to which they receive supervisory support in their job. This measure in general may include career guidance, performance feedback, challenging work assignments, and work opportunities that promote employee development

(Fields, 2002: 108). Responses for the measure were obtained by using a 5-point Likert type scale where *5 = strongly disagree, 4 = disagree to some extent, 3 = uncertain, 2 = agree to some extent, and 1 = strongly agree.* Items for the measure included such statements like, "My religious supervisor cares about whether or not I achieve my goals," and "My religious supervisor gives me helpful advice about improving my performance when I need it."

When an exploratory principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation was conducted, it yielded three factors with initial eigenvalues greater than 1. The Total Variance Explained was 67.45%. The three factors extracted correspond to the nature of the original measure. The original measure generally assesses up to four areas of supervisory support. Thus in this study, career guidance (alpha .73), performance feedback (alpha .71), and work opportunities (alpha .58) were established. Consistent with the original scale, the three factors/dimensions were combined to form the measure of supervisory support in the job. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the measure was .75. Table 4 below provides details for factors on the 8 item measure of supervisory support.

Table 4: Factor Loadings: Supervisory Support Measure

Items	1	2	3
My religious superior cares about whether or not I achieve my goals	.82		
My religious superior takes the time to learn about my career goals and aspirations	.81		
My religious superior provides assignments that give me the opportunity to develop and strengthen new skills	.73		
My religious superior gives me helpful advice about improving my performance when I need it		.86	
My religious superior gives me helpful feedback about my performance		.78	
My superior keeps me informed about different career opportunities for me in our congregation		.70	
My religious superior makes sure I get the credit when I accomplish something substantial on the job			.85
My religious superior assigns me special projects that increase my visibility in our congregation			.77

3.3.4 Overall performance

The measure of overall performance was based on global performance measures. It is a 10 item measure to assess the extent employees rate themselves in terms of performing activities related to their work. Responses for the measure were obtained by using a 5-point Likert type scale where 1 = *strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = not sure, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree.* Items for the measure included such statements like 1. "I feel that my performance directly reflect my ability," 2. "I perform well on my task because I put in the effort," 3. If I fail to perform at the expected level, it is because I lack skills in that area."

Factor analysis for the measure yielded four factors with initial eigenvalues greater than 1. The Total Variance Explained was 65%. The four factor extracted were combined to form the measure of overall performance. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the measure was .58. Table 5 below provides details for factor on the 10 item measure of overall performance.

Table 5: Factor loadings: Overall performance

Items	1	2	3	4
Lack plays a big role in my success	.86			
How well I do my task depends on luck	.83			
When I get a good grade on a course, it is because the instructor is an easy grader	.55			
If I don't do a good job, it is because I do not try harder	.50			
I perform well in any task because I put in the effort		.88		
I feel that my performance directly reflects my ability		.80		
Organization environment plays a big role in influencing my job performance			.87	
Many times my job performance is not under my control			.56	
If I fail to perform at the expected level, it is because I lack skills in that area.				.91
If I do well in a job, it is because I have the skills to succeed				.68

4.0 Results and discussion

4.1 Correlation results

Table 6 below presents the findings which are based on correlation analysis performed in this study. The table contains Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations among the variables in the study. This study showed that self-determination and impact as dimensions of empowerment were positively and significantly correlated with overall performance (r = .29, p < 0.01 and r = .35, p < 0.01). Likewise supervisory support was positively correlated with overall performance (r = .36, p < 0.01) as hypothesized. The bold data in the diagonal indicate the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the measures.

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Table 6: Means, Standard Deviation and Pearson Correlations[a,b,c]

	Mean	SD	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Age	2.9	.89	98												
Work Experience	1.3	.44	61	-.49**											
Full Time	1.9	.86	46	.70**	-0.16										
Part Time	1.2	.41	15	0.41	.b	0.27									
Teamwork	1.1	.29	43	0.11	-0.06	0.07	-0.15								
Nature of Job	3.7	1.09	42	0.03	0.21	0.26	-0.01	0.24							
Meaning	4.3	.59	69	-0.1	-0.08	-0.18	-0.03	-0.19	-0.09	**.75**					
Competence	4.3	.74	70	0	0.19	-0.08	0.41	-0.05	-0.23	.34**	**.76**				
Self-Determination	3.7	.69	69	0.06	0.04	-0.06	0.20	-0.10	0.03	.30**	.33**	**.68**			
Impact	3.7	.79	69	-0.07	0.03	0.03	0.15	-0.13	-0.06	.45**	.37**	.42**	**.74**		
Supervisory Support	3.9	.61	102	0.04	.27*	0.03	.51*	-0.004	-0.06	.23*	0.16	.23*	.20*	**.75**	
Overall Performance	3.3	.51	102	0.05	0.14	-0.13	0.33	-0.03	0.02	-0.04	-0.01	.29**	.35**	.36**	**.58**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed). b Cannot be computed because at least one of the variables is constant. The bold data in the diagonal indicate the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the measure

4.2 Regression results

Multiple regression analysis was used as the primary test of the research question. The main purpose was to find out the extent to which empowerment and perceived supervisory support explain overall performance. Regression results are presented in Table 7. Model 1 and 2 present results related to the extent control variables (Model 1), four dimensions of empowerment and supervisory support (Model 2) explain overall performance.

Model 1 (control variables) accounted for 7 percent of the variance on overall performance [$F(7,95)$ = 1.027, however p was not significant (0.42) ($\dagger$p < .10)]. The addition of independent variables which are the four dimensions of empowerment (meaning, self-determination, competence and impact) and supervisory support (model 2) to the regression accounted for 27 percent unique variance above the variance explained by control variables (ΔF = (5,90) = 7.33, p < 0.001). These findings show that only self-determination and impact as dimensions of empowerment and perceived supervisory support as independent variables to some extent explain variance in overall performance. These findings support   the   study   hypothese

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Table 7: Multiple regression analysis to test for the variance accounted for by empowerment and supervisory support on overall performance

Variables	Model 1	Model 2
	Overall Performance	
Step 1: Control Variables	β	β
Age	.10	.09
Education	-.03	-.07
Work Experience	.23	.11
Nature of the Job	.02	.01
Full Time Experience	-.17	-.20
Part Time Experience	.5	.22
Team-Working	-.04	-.05
Step 2: Independent Variables		
Meaning		-.27*
Self Determination		.15*
Competence		-.14
Impact		.31**
Supervisory Support		.25*
ΔR^2	.07	.27**
Model R^2	.07	.34**
Adjusted R^2	.002	.25**
Model F	1.03	3.85
N	104	104

Note: $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^*p < 0.05$, $\dagger p < .10$; all tests are one-tailed.

4.3 Discussion

As it has been highlighted in various policy documents, the empowerment of women is a crucial issue in the whole process of fulfilling the UN Sustainable Development Goal 5. The empowerment of women and gender equity are referred to as part of the millennium challenges in the goals of rescuing the continent of Africa from poverty and other woes which beset the continent's problems. It is likewise stated in the Tanzania Development Vision 2025 that the aim of the vision is to make Tanzania a nation imbued with high quality

livelihood, peace, stability and unity, good governance, a well-educated and learning society, a competitive economy capable of producing sustainable growth and shared benefits. The Tanzania Development Vision 2025 cannot leave women behind in the course of implementing its vision. Based on our study findings among religious women in Tanzania; empowerment impacts on their sense of supervisory support and overall performance. This is evidenced by correlational results.

The study further showed that strong sense of being empowered in particular on self-determination and impact and attitudes towards supervisory support positively predicted overall performance. As a special group of women who are identified by their religious motives, charisma and mission of their founders, working as a team is part of their characteristics. This study finding has also supported this phenomenon whereby 90% of the sampled religious said they enjoyed working in a team. Likewise, the study showed that about 60% of the religious women identified themselves as working either as professionals or technicians.

These findings have theoretical significance because studies show that women who succeed in various professions have always come up from rare professions among which were reserved only for men. The story of Patricia Barker (2009) is an example of a woman who pioneered the experience of being the only female working on many assignments including technical financial reporting on an environment which was mostly dominated by male environment. Her conclusion was that "it is more difficult for women than men to attain and retain elite positions" (Barker, 2009: 5). Her position and objective on exposing her experience was on a positive manner. She wanted to show "why some women do achieve elite positions" (ibid. pg. 6). Religious women are an example of socially identified groups that achieve in empowering their members.

Currently, Tanzania is working on/and implementing the Five Year Development Plan (2016/2017-2020/2021), with the slogan "Nurturing Industrialization for Economic Transformation and Human Development." This comprehensive development plan urges Tanzanian citizens to participate, prepare, and implement plans for the national development through transforming Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) into viable and sustainable business entities capable of contributing up to 50% of manufacturing GDP. The government argues on the need to incorporate gender and women empowerment in all the development agenda. Tanzania has been somewhat successful on women empowerment by increasing the proportion of women in senior positions

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in different levels of decision-making from 33% during 2010/2011 to 41% during 2014/2015 (Ministry of Finance and Planning, 2016).

The study findings have affirmed the hypothesis 2 that there is a relationship between empowerment (self-determination and impact) and perceived supervisory support. Semantically, this study shows that empowerment and supervisory support lead to increase in the overall efficiency and performance of an organization. As insisted by Raub and Robert (2010), empowerment can have a significant impact on many organizational contexts such as leadership effectiveness and efficiency, job satisfaction, creativity, team performance, and negatively related to strain and turnover intentions. This study finding has supported this proposition whereby 73% of the sampled religious women said religious superiors provide assignments that give them the opportunity to develop and strengthen new skills.

4.4 Implication for practice

The study findings contribute to our understanding of how performance varies depending on how empowerment and leadership supervisory support are cherished. There is a high chance of good performance to a job for religious women whose superiors take the time to learn about their career goals and aspirations. These variations must be considered in appraisal instruments especially in organizations operating under different cultural background whether in religious or secular contexts.

4.5 Implication for research

The results of the study are not without limitations. It was difficult to make a direct contrast between charisma and mission from diverse religious congregations. Ideally, these contrasts would assist the researchers in pinpointing charisma or mission-specific factors. Likewise, performance is a multi-dimensional concept. In this regard, our conclusions on overall performance should be taken with caution since it was not a hundred percent measure for it. The results however suggest that religious congregation charisma or mission might influence both perceptions and attitudes to performance.

5. Conclusion

Despite the importance of religion in social and economic development, gender themes have been marginalized within the religious studies (Avishai, Jafar and Rinaldo, 2015). This marginalization is particularly practiced in developing countries. This study used Western scholarship as a point of departure to examine women's involvement in leadership as a result of empowerment and leadership supervisory support in formal organizations to enhance the overall performance and excellence in Africa (Wessinger, 1996: 6).

With regard to the question on how religious women as members of religious institutions succeed in overcoming challenges of empowering their workforce and bridge skills gaps in the country, it is clear that the quality of education they are getting and the numbers of religious women in higher education institutions are geared at achieving that goal. Most of the empowering agents such as religious congregations, higher education institutions and dioceses, have been able to bridge skills gap of their employees by sending majority of women religious for training in various colleges and Higher Educational Institutions.

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