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SERVANT LEADERSHIP AND CHURCH PERFORMANCE: A CASE STUDY OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THAILAND'S NORTHERN NETWORK

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of servant leadership characteristics on organizational performance within the Church of Christ in Thailand's Northern Region. Utilizing a Multiple Indicators and Multiple Causes (MIMIC) framework, the research examines the relationships between servant leadership traits and their impact on church effectiveness. Data collected from 300 church executives and pastors were analyzed using inferential statistical methods. Findings reveal that servant leadership characteristics are highly valued, with foresight demonstrating the most significant overall influence on church performance, followed by awareness, persuasion, and mindset. The proposed structural model exhibits a good fit with empirical data ($\chi^2/df = 1.023$, CFI = 1.000, RMSEA = 0.010), supporting the application of servant leadership in church management. The research emphasizes the importance of fostering member participation and cooperation to strengthen church communities. This study contributes to the development of strategic and managerial approaches that promote commitment, unity, and strength within church communities.

Keywords: Servant Leadership, Church Performance, Thailand, Organizational Development, Religious Leadership

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Introduction

In an era of globalization characterized by rapid economic, social, and technological changes, religious organizations worldwide have increasingly recognized the importance of servant leadership in navigating transformation and sustaining long-term viability (Spears, 2010). Servant leadership, internationally recognized as a leadership approach rooted in listening, empathy, community building, and the development of organizational members, has gained substantial traction (Greenleaf, 1977). Insights from *The Palgrave Handbook of Servant Leadership*, edited by Dhiman et al. (2023), highlight the servant leader's role as a spiritual guide. This inspirational force can connect deeply with followers. This style of leadership has been shown to enhance organizational success and efficiency significantly (Awasthi & Walumbwa, 2022; Eva et al., 2019; Schmalor & Heine, 2022; Khan et al., 2023; Malik et al., 2022; Özbek, 2020; Neubert, 2022), mainly due to its ability to motivate individuals to perform at their best.

Numerous studies support the positive impact of servant leadership traits on subordinates, particularly in religious institutions such as churches, where leaders play a pivotal role in shaping organizational strength and success. This leadership model aligns closely with Christian doctrine and has demonstrated potential in enhancing the operational performance of church organizations.

In Thailand, interest in servant leadership has grown steadily over the past decade, particularly within religious and educational institutions. Domestic research has underscored its role in fostering collaboration, unity, and sustainable organizational development (Sanchon et al., 2020). The majority of studies have been conducted in educational settings—for instance, the work of Saksaengwijit & Maneechote (2021) found that the servant leadership traits of school administrators significantly influenced teachers' work commitment within Secondary Education Service Area Office 2.

In the business sector, research by Boonumsirikij & Panchompoo (2023) reported a positive relationship between servant leadership and both entrepreneurial traits and organizational resilience. Similarly, a recent study by Pruehong et al. (2024) noted a strong link between servant leadership in church organizations and participatory management, as well as the development of member potential in Northern Thailand.

Churches affiliated with the Church of Christ in Thailand stand out for their cultural diversity and unique community contexts, which present distinct challenges in leadership and organizational development. These include fostering unity among members, building trust in leadership, and adapting to social change. Akraphichayatorn's research (2016) pointed to ongoing struggles among church leaders in Thailand, including communication issues, motivation, and member development. Moreover, churches under the Church of Christ in Thailand continue to face challenges in cultivating leaders who exemplify servant leadership, particularly in culturally and religiously diverse settings, aligning with the attribution of sustainable organization by the church of Christ in Thailand, which comprises Spiritual Stewardship - Upholds Christian values in mission, leadership, and community service. Social Responsibility - Supports vulnerable groups, promotes peace, justice, and inclusion. Environmental Care - Encourages creation care through eco-friendly practices and teachings. Economic Sustainability - Manages resources transparently for long-term ministry and development—cultural Sensitivity - Respects Thai identity while integrating faith in local contexts. Leadership Development - Invests in nurturing ethical, servant-hearted leaders. Community Engagement - Builds strong relationships with local communities and interfaith groups. From interviews with numerous church leaders in Northern Thailand, one of the primary concerns was the decline in the number of church members. Hence, leadership development by enhancing servant-hearted leaders is crucial. (Church of Christ in Thailand, 2020)

Given these challenges, it is essential to examine the characteristics of servant leadership that contribute to the performance of churches in Northern Thailand. While research into servant leadership in Thai church settings has grown, a lack of in-depth studies remains, focusing specifically on how these leadership traits affect organizational outcomes within churches affiliated with the Church of Christ in Thailand.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate how servant leadership attributes influence church performance in Northern Thailand, particularly within this denominational context. This research is of both theoretical and practical importance. It offers a foundation for strengthening and developing leadership that aligns with the unique needs of Thai churches. Furthermore, it enhances understanding of the role servant leadership plays in religious organizations in Northern Thailand and contributes to the formulation of policies and training strategies tailored to local cultural and religious dynamics—ultimately promoting greater effectiveness and long-term sustainability in the region's faith-based institutions.

Literature Review

This study draws upon a comprehensive review of the literature, encompassing theories, conceptual frameworks, and empirical studies from both domestic and international contexts. The theoretical foundation is primarily informed by the works of three key scholars: Greenleaf (1977), Spears (1996), and Stone et al. (2004). Through this literature review, the researcher identified a correlation between servant leadership characteristics and organizational performance. These findings provide insight into the key factors that define servant leadership and how these traits are structured and understood.

According to Greenleaf (2002), Spears (2010), and Patterson (2003), the core attributes of a servant leader can be summarized as: Listening: Leaders in general must possess communication and decision-making skills, which are essential for leadership., Empathy: Servant leaders are committed to understanding and empathizing with others., Healing: Healing relationships is a powerful driving force for transformation and unity., Awareness: Awareness enables servant leaders to understand issues related to ethics, power, and values., Persuasion: Servant leaders seek to persuade others without resorting to coercion or force., Conceptualization: Servant leaders possess a vision and mindset that extend beyond short-term performance goals., Foresight: Foresight is the ability to anticipate situations and potential outcomes that may arise in the future, even if they cannot be clearly explained in detail at present., Stewardship: Servant leaders must be committed to serving the needs of others, emphasizing open persuasion rather than control., Commitment to the Growth of People: Servant leaders are always aware of their responsibility to nurture each individual's growth, both in terms of personal development and professional development. Building Community: Servant leaders support and promote the creation of genuine communities within their organizations.

Organizational Performance

Theoretical Framework: This research employs the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) as a conceptual framework for assessing and managing organizational performance. Initially developed by Kaplan & Norton (2005), the Balanced Scorecard has become a widely adopted tool for evaluating organizational effectiveness—a critical factor for the sustainability of modern institutions. Both profit-oriented and nonprofit organizations increasingly emphasize the importance of robust performance measurement systems (Rompho, 2010). A key strength of the Balanced Scorecard lies in its multidimensional approach. Rather than focusing solely on financial outcomes, it encompasses four interrelated perspectives: Financial Perspective - This dimension examines fiscal outcomes such as return on investment (ROI) and revenue generation. Customer Perspective - It measures customer satisfaction, loyalty, and market share. Internal Process Perspective - This focuses on the efficiency and quality of internal

operations. The Learning and Growth Perspective evaluates employee satisfaction, retention, and knowledge management.

These four perspectives work in concert, supporting each other to guide organizations toward achieving strategic objectives in a balanced and sustainable manner. Servant leadership has been recognized as a key factor influencing various aspects of organizational sustainability (Adison et al., 2024; Mishra & Hassen, 2023; Abbas et al., 2020; Hisham et al., 2020; Chotsawai, 2022; Akraphichayatorn & Aebkeeriwong, 2015; Sanchon et al., 2020). Specifically, within internal processes, servant leadership is shown to enhance organizational commitment, employee engagement, and the overall organizational climate (Kuanprasert & Phetsombat, 2019; Saksaelengwijit & Maneechote, 2021; Pruethong et al., 2024; Matthayomchat & Boonmepipit, 2023; Chanseng, 2018; Ren & Bunchapattanasakda, 2025). Furthermore, in the domain of learning and development—particularly in self-improvement, team collaboration, and organizational advancement—servant leadership traits play a vital role (Junnoey et al., 2021; Chelong et al., 2024).

Based on the literature review, both domestic and international studies have explored the impact of servant leadership characteristics on organizational performance. However, most of these studies tend to focus on general organizations such as government agencies, schools, Catholic educational institutions, and hospitals. Research specifically addressing Protestant churches affiliated with the Church of Christ in Thailand appears to be extremely limited or absent. This presents a research gap that the authors are interested in exploring.

This comprehensive review highlights the pivotal role of servant leadership in enhancing performance across various organizational dimensions. These findings inform the construction of the research framework, as illustrated in Figure 1.

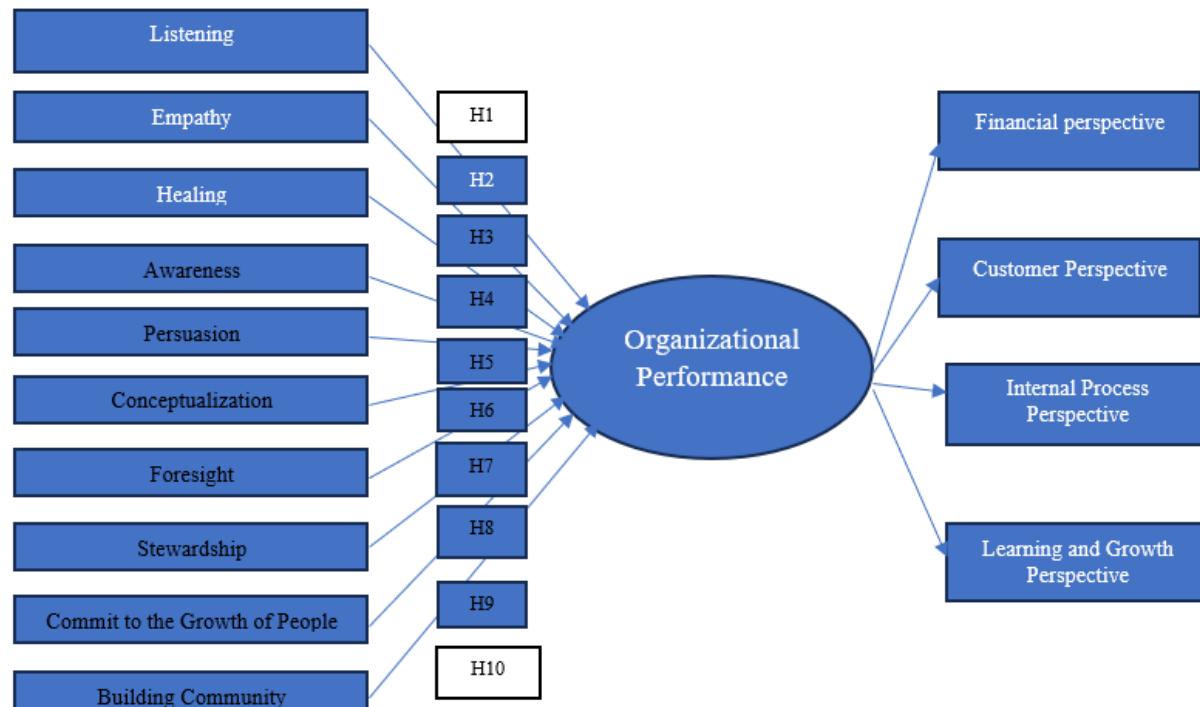


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Research Hypotheses

- H1: Active listening positively impacts organizational effectiveness.
- H2: Empathy significantly influences organizational outcomes.
- H3: A healing leadership style enhances organizational performance.
- H4: Leader awareness and mindfulness affect operational success.

- H5: Inclusive participation contributes to organizational achievement.
- H6: A leader's mindset influences organizational output.
- H7: Foresight is linked to improved performance metrics.
- H8: Attentiveness to others shapes performance outcomes.
- H9: Supporting team development boosts organizational success.
- H10: Building community positively impacts performance results.

Research Methodology

Population and Sample

The study's target population consisted of church leaders or pastors affiliated with churches in the Northern Region of Thailand, specifically those under the Church of Christ in Thailand. These churches are located in towns, cities, and rural areas throughout the region, totaling 834. The study sample was drawn from this population to represent church leadership within the same region. Yamane's formula (Yamane, 1967) was applied to determine the minimum required sample size, resulting in a recommendation of 270 participants.

To ensure sufficient statistical power for meaningful analysis and to support the reliability of the statistical tests, the researcher initially aimed for a sample size of 300 participants, which is considered adequate for this type of analysis (Tabachnick et al., 2007, citing Comrey & Lee, 1992). To further enhance reliability and mitigate potential data loss due to incomplete responses, the target sample size was increased to 350. Of the 350 questionnaires distributed, 311 were returned, yielding a response rate of 88.86%. However, after data cleaning and quality checks, only 300 responses were ultimately included in the final analysis.

A multi-stage sampling method was employed for sample selection, including:

- 1) Selection of Provinces: Provinces within the Northern Region of Thailand were selected for inclusion in the study using a random sampling method.
- 2) Proportional Sampling: Participants (church leaders or pastors affiliated with the Church of Christ in Thailand within the Northern Region) were drawn from each selected province based on the proportion of church leaders in that province. The initial target was 350 individuals for the study. The proportional breakdown of the sample size is detailed below.
- 3) Provincial Allocation: The number of participants from each province was determined proportionally to the number of officially registered churches affiliated with the Church of Christ in Thailand in the Northern Region. Data on registered churches were obtained from the church information system managed by the Department of Church Development in the Northern Region, under the Church of Christ in Thailand.
- 4) Sample Calculation: The number of samples per province was calculated using proportional allocation, according to the formula: $(350/834) \times (\text{Number of churches in that province})$. This ensured that the sample size from each province reflected its proportion of the total population of 834 registered churches in the Northern Region.

Data Collection

Data for this study were collected between June 2024 and May 2025. A structured questionnaire, developed based on a comprehensive literature review, served as the primary research instrument. The questionnaire utilized 5-point Likert scales to assess church leaders' (1) respondent profiles (demographic data), and (2) perceptions of servant leadership traits and their influence on church performance in Northern Thailand. Additionally, it facilitated (3) model validation (evaluating the fit of the structural equation model) and (4) impact assessment (analyzing the relationship between servant leadership traits and church performance).

The questionnaire's quality was rigorously evaluated by a panel of three experts, who assessed its construct validity, content validity, clarity, and appropriateness. The item-objective congruence (IOC) indices ranged from 0.60 to 1.00, exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.50 (Rovinelli & Hambleton, 1977). Following validation, the questionnaire was pilot-tested with

30 individuals outside the main study sample to refine the instrument and assess its reliability. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the entire construct measuring servant leadership characteristics was 0.919, indicating acceptable internal consistency (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Data Analysis

- 1) Descriptive statistics were applied to examine the characteristics of the sample and the questionnaire responses. This included frequency distributions, percentages, means, and standard deviations.
- 2) Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to assess how well the observed variables represented the underlying latent constructs. Subsequently, inferential statistics were employed to analyze the structural equation model (SEM), testing the research hypotheses and examining both direct and indirect effects among variables.

Research Results

General Background of Respondents

The majority of respondents were male, totaling 224 individuals, accounting for 74.67%, while 76 were female, representing 25.33%. Regarding age, the largest group was those between 41 and 50 years old, with 112 participants (37.33%), followed by those aged 31 to 40, with 98 individuals (32.67%). Respondents aged 51 to 60 made up 62 people (20.67%), while only 28 participants (9.33%) were under the age of 30. In terms of educational background, most respondents held a bachelor's degree, with 184 individuals, or 61.33%. This was followed by 92 participants (30.67%) who held a master's degree, and 24 individuals (8.00%) who had not completed their undergraduate studies. Regarding work experience, the largest segment consisted of 11 to 20 years of experience, with 116 respondents (38.67%), followed by 92 individuals (30.67%) with 6 to 10 years of experience. Those with over 20 years of service totaled 62 people (20.67%), while only 30 participants (10.00%) had five years or less of service. These findings suggest that most leaders have maintained long-standing and continuous involvement in religious service.

Levels of Perception Among Church Leaders in the Northern Region Concerning Servant Leadership Traits

The study examined the importance level of servant leadership characteristics and organizational performance by analyzing the mean and standard deviation. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Analysis of Mean and Standard Deviation for Servant Leadership Characteristics towards Organizational Performance Factors

Factor Components	Mean	S.D.	Meaning
Servant leadership characteristics	4.32	.309	Highest
Listening	4.41	.437	Highest
Empathy	4.41	.458	Highest
Healing	4.13	.504	High
Awareness	4.27	.443	Highest
Persuasion	4.12	.498	High
Conceptualization	4.22	.461	Highest
Foresight	4.33	.412	Highest
Stewardship	4.47	.424	Highest
Commitment to the growth of people	4.46	.408	Highest
Building community	4.36	.439	Highest
Performance outcomes	4.01	.477	High
Regarding the church's management performance	3.91	.650	High

Factor Components	Mean	S.D.	Meaning
In terms of member services	4.09	.550	High
Regarding internal processes	3.99	.556	High
Concerning organizational learning and growth	4.04	.574	High

From Table 1, the findings indicate that servant leadership characteristics within the context of the Church of Christ in Thailand—based on data collected from a sample of 270 individuals, including pastors and church workers—were rated at a very high level overall. The statistical analysis revealed a mean score of 4.32 out of 5.00, with a standard deviation of 0.309, suggesting a strong consensus among respondents.

Upon closer examination of the dimensions, several aspects of servant leadership were rated exceptionally high. Notably, "Stewardship" emerged as the most prominent trait, reflecting leaders' willingness to serve others with care, sacrifice, and genuine joy in helping. This dimension received the highest average score of 4.47. For instance, the item "The pastor tends to members' wellbeing through service" scored 4.59, the highest of all items in the survey.

The following most significant attribute was "Commitment to the Growth of People" (mean score 4.46), reflecting leaders' dedication to nurturing followers' knowledge, skills, and spiritual development. One highly rated statement in this area—"You consistently encourage youth leaders in the church to attend training seminars"—received a mean of 4.50, placing it among the top-rated items.

Other dimensions also ranked at the "very high" level, including "Listening" (4.41), "Empathy" (4.41), "Foresight" (4.33), "Building Community" (4.36), and "Conceptualization" (4.22). These results show that church leaders not only serve in spiritual roles but also demonstrate vision, planning, and effective communication.

Interestingly, the dimension with the lowest average score—though still at a "high" level—was "Persuasion", with a mean of 4.12. This may reflect the nature of servant leadership, which prioritizes service over directive influence or control.

Organizational Performance

The results of the data analysis reflect the perspectives of church leaders or pastors in the Northern region regarding organizational performance, specifically in terms of operational outcomes, customer satisfaction, internal processes, and organizational learning and growth. Overall, the church was found to be performing at a "high" level across all dimensions: administration, member services, internal processes, and organizational learning and growth. The overall mean score was 4.01, with a standard deviation of 0.477, reflecting consistency and stability in the church's management practices.

In terms of administrative performance, the average score was 3.91, also at a high level. Key indicators included the continual growth in church membership over three consecutive years (mean = 3.98, SD = 0.861) and the adequacy of offerings to cover monthly expenses (mean = 3.87, SD = 0.919).

Member services received the highest average score among all dimensions at 4.09. This suggests strong active participation from members in church activities. Notable indicators included the congregation's collective contribution of resources toward completing missions (mean = 4.16) and members' satisfaction with their involvement in church programs (mean = 4.15).

For internal processes, the average score was 3.99. The church demonstrated standardized, efficient, and trackable operational systems, including a clearly defined mission framework (mean = 3.99, SD = 0.724) and delivering services promptly and without disruption (mean = 4.09, SD = 0.660).

The final dimension, organizational learning and growth, had an average score of 4.04. This shows a clear emphasis on continuous capacity development among members. The church

particularly excelled in maintaining accessible communication channels for all groups within the congregation, which received the highest individual score in the report (mean = 4.26, SD = 0.702).

In conclusion, the churches under the management of the study's sample group exhibited effective operations across all key areas. This includes both quantitative aspects (e.g., membership growth and resource sufficiency) and qualitative aspects (e.g., engagement and satisfaction levels), all of which are vital for the long-term sustainability of church organizations.

Structural Equation Model (SEM) Analysis

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to analyze the factors influencing church performance among Churches of Christ in Northern Thailand. The analysis revealed that two primary factors are significant: the characteristics of servant leadership (as measured across ten sub-dimensions) and overall organizational performance. The results of the SEM analysis are visually presented in Figure 2.

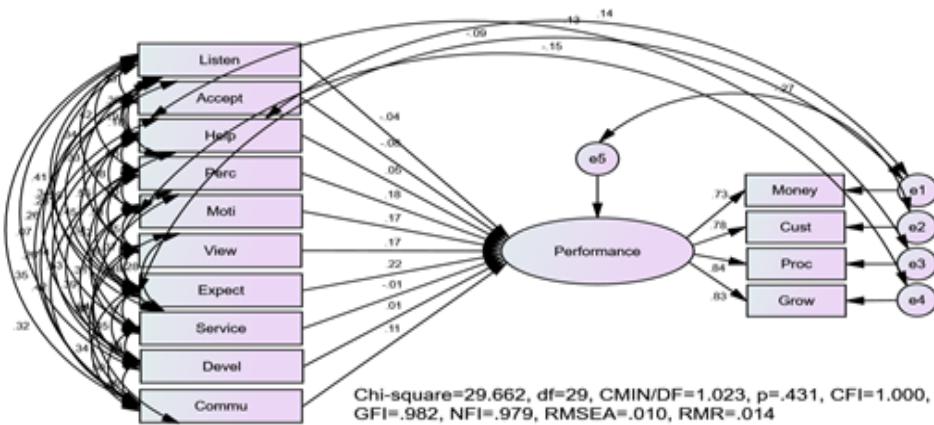


Figure 2 Analysis of the Model Illustrating the Influence of Servant Leadership Attributes on the Operational Performance of Churches in the Northern Region under the Church of Christ in Thailand Network

The results of the model fit evaluation, when compared against the established criteria, indicate the following: the chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio (χ^2/df) should be less than 2; the p-value from the statistical test should be non-significant; the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) is expected to exceed 0.90; the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) should also be above 0.90. Moreover, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), reflecting model error, should be below 0.05. At the same time, the Root Mean Square Residual (RMR), which measures standardized residual discrepancies, should similarly fall below 0.05 (Tabachnick et al., 2007). All indicators meet the recommended thresholds. Therefore, it can be concluded that the model describing the servant leadership characteristics that influence the operational outcomes of churches in the northern region aligns acceptably with the theoretical framework.

Table 2 Goodness-of-Fit Indices of the Model Representing Servant Leadership Attributes Influencing the Operational Effectiveness of Churches in the Northern Region under the Church of Christ in Thailand

χ^2	df	χ^2/df	p-Value	GFI	CFI	RMSEA	RMR	translation
29.662	29	1.023	.431	.982	1.000	.010	.014	Accepted

Table 3 Total Effect Values

Standardized Total Effects (Group number 1 - Default model)

	Commu	Devel	Service	Expect	View	Moti	Perc	Help	Accept	Listen	Performance
Performance	.106	.015	-.006	.223	.166	.174	.185	.053	-.081	-.035	.000
Grow	.089	.012	-.005	.186	.138	.145	.154	.044	-.067	-.029	.832
Proc	.089	.012	-.005	.187	.139	.146	.155	.044	-.068	-.029	.837
Cust	.083	.011	-.004	.174	.129	.136	.144	.041	-.063	-.027	.779
Money	.078	.011	-.004	.164	.122	.128	.136	.039	-.059	-.026	.733

Table 4 Outcomes of the Hypothesis Testing—Primary and Subsidiary Research Assumptions

Hypothesis		Estimate	C.R.	Conclusion
H1	Servant leadership traits influence the operational outcomes of churches	0.622**	1.457	Supported
H1.1	Listening as a trait impacts church performance	-0.035	-0.549	Not Supported
H1.2	Empathy as a trait affects church performance	-0.081	-1.327	Not Supported
H1.3	Healing as a trait contributes to church performance	0.053	0.674	Not Supported
H1.4	Awareness as a trait influences church outcomes	0.185*	2.293	Supported
H1.5	Persuasion as a trait affects church performance	0.174*	2.200	Supported
H1.6	Conceptualization as a trait influences church effectiveness	0.166*	2.080	Supported
H1.7	Foresight as a trait impacts church operations	0.223**	3.051	Supported
H1.8	Stewardship as a trait influences church outcomes	-0.006	-0.083	Not Supported
H1.9	Commitment to the growth of people influences the church's performance	0.015	.0200	Not Supported
H1.10	Building community as a trait impacts church performance	0.106	1.604	Not Supported

Note: Single asterisk () indicates significance at the .05 level; double asterisk (**) at the .01 level.*

Main Hypothesis Testing Results

The investigation titled “Servant Leadership Traits Influencing the Performance of Churches in the Northern Region under the Church of Christ in Thailand” reveals that characteristics associated with servant leadership significantly affect church performance. This highlights the importance of leadership qualities rooted in service, attentive listening, vision, and community building as key contributors to organizational effectiveness and success in a church context.

Sub-Hypothesis Testing

The analysis of sub-hypotheses can be categorized into two main groups: Group Supporting the Hypotheses Statistically. The examination of sub-hypotheses identified four servant leadership traits that significantly impact church performance. Ranked by the strength of their influence, these are: visionary thinking, self-awareness, persuasion, and conceptualization.

Construct a causal relationship model (servant leadership characteristics exhibited by church executives or pastors in Northern Thailand impact the performance of churches affiliated with the Church of Christ in Thailand). This research summary led to the construction of a causal relationship model illustrating how servant leadership traits influence leadership practices in churches under the Church of Christ in Thailand, Northern Region.

- 1) The study on the importance of servant leadership traits affecting the performance of churches in the Northern region under the Christ in Thailand revealed that church leaders highly value all aspects of servant leadership traits. Overall, these traits were rated at the highest level, while the organizational performance was rated at a high level.
- 2) The evaluation of model fit for the structural equation model examining servant leadership traits impacting church performance in the Northern region showed that the model aligns well with the theoretical framework at an acceptable level. The significant servant leadership traits influencing church performance, ranked by their impact, are foresight, awareness, persuasion, and having a mindset framework.
- 3) This study contributes new knowledge by developing a servant leadership traits model that affects the performance of churches in the Northern region under the Church of Christ in Thailand. The model is illustrated in Figure 3.

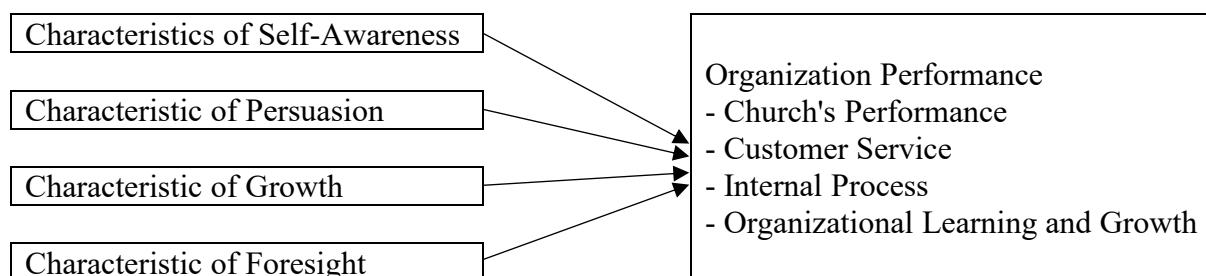


Figure 3 A Model of Servant Leadership Characteristics Influencing the Performance of Northern District Churches under the Church of Christ in Thailand

Figure 3 presents a model summarizing the servant leadership traits influencing church performance within the Church of Christ in Thailand's Northern Region. This context-specific model identifies four key dimensions of servant leadership:

- 1) Awareness Leadership: Demonstrating a deep understanding of the surrounding spiritual, social, and cultural environment.
- 2) Persuasive Leadership: Motivating and fostering collaboration rather than relying on authority.
- 3) Mindset-Based Leadership: Adhering to core beliefs and ideals that prioritize service.
- 4) Visionary Leadership: Foreseeing the future, communicating a clear vision, and guiding the organization.

These four dimensions are closely linked to the church's performance across four key areas, based on the Balanced Scorecard framework (Kaplan & Norton, 2005): Financial Performance, which involves managing resources and ensuring the church's financial sustainability. Customer Service: quality care and support for members and the surrounding community. Internal Processes: efficiency in mission work, pastoral duties, and administration. Organizational Learning and Growth: developing new leaders, fostering a learning culture, and passing on the mission. In summary, the findings strongly support the notion that servant leadership is deeply ingrained in the practices of Thai church leaders. This leadership style not only aligns with religious values but also makes a meaningful contribution to organizational development at structural, social, and spiritual levels. Among the various traits, "Stewardship", "Commitment to the Growth of People", and "Listening" stood out, emphasizing the leaders' focus on selfless service, care, and support for the personal and spiritual growth of their followers.

Conclusion and Discussion

This study investigated the influence of servant leadership traits on church performance within the Church of Christ in Thailand's Northern Region. The findings reveal a strong endorsement of servant leadership principles among church leaders, aligning with previous research highlighting the effectiveness of this leadership style in church and educational settings (Chanseng, 2018; Sanchon et al., 2020). Specifically, "Stewardship," "Commitment to the Growth of People," and "Listening" emerged as highly valued traits, reflecting a focus on selfless service and follower development. The results indicate that church operations are generally performed at a high level across administration, member services, internal processes, and organizational learning, suggesting long-term sustainability (Akraphichayatorn & Aebkeeriwong, 2015).

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) identified two core factors influencing church performance: servant leadership characteristics and overall organizational performance. Visionary Thinking, Awareness, Persuasion, and Conceptualization were found to have significant positive effects. Leaders with visionary capabilities can set clear direction and improve church outcomes (Pratakkulvongsa & Singchangchai, 2024). Awareness enables leaders to guide the organization effectively by understanding its context (Chelong et al., 2024). Persuasion facilitates member motivation and collaboration (Sanchon et al., 2020). Conceptualization helps leaders to connect religious teachings with practical operations (Sanchon et al., 2020).

However, it is notable that Listening, Empathy, Healing, Caring, Self-Sacrifice, and Community Building did not show statistically significant direct effects on church performance. This contrasts with some studies that emphasize the importance of these traits (Pruethong et al., 2024), suggesting that while desirable, they may require complementary skills, such as clear communication and vision, to drive organizational outcomes effectively (Akraphichayatorn, 2016). The lower rating of persuasion compared to visionary leadership and community building (Sanchon et al., 2020) suggests a preference for service and support over authority.

These findings have several important implications. First, they underscore the relevance of servant leadership within Thai churches, confirming its association with positive organizational outcomes. Secondly, the identification of Visionary Thinking, Awareness, Persuasion, and Conceptualization as critical traits suggests specific areas for leadership development programs. Churches should prioritize training and initiatives that enhance leaders' abilities to envision the future, understand their context, effectively communicate, and develop practical frameworks. The emphasis on these traits aligns well with the Church of Christ in Thailand's framework for sustainable organization, including Spiritual Stewardship, Social

Environmental Care, Economic Sustainability, Cultural Sensitivity, Leadership Development, and Community Engagement.

Furthermore, the study emphasizes the importance of fostering a culture of cooperation, attentive listening, and mutual service, as these elements enhance both effectiveness and member commitment. These elements are consistent with the findings from various studies in organizational management. Continuous monitoring and evaluation of servant leadership practices are recommended to adapt management to meet the needs of the Christian community better.

This study has several limitations. First, it focuses solely on churches in the Northern Region of Thailand, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions or contexts. Second, the use of questionnaires may be subject to response bias and limitations in capturing the full complexity of leadership dynamics. Third, the rapidly changing social and cultural environment could affect the long-term suitability of the findings. Finally, constraints on time and resources may have limited the depth and breadth of data collection.

Future research should address these limitations by expanding the scope to other regions, using mixed-methods approaches to gather richer data, and considering the influence of cultural and spiritual factors on leadership effectiveness. Studies could also explore the use of technology and innovation to enhance servant leadership practices. Additionally, exploring gender diversity and servant leadership characteristics will provide us with a broader understanding of the topic. Specifically, future research may investigate the development of leadership training modules based on these significant traits and examine the use of digital technology to enhance servant leadership practices and strengthen leadership development initiatives. A longitudinal study will enable the exploration of the effects of implementing a servant leadership development training on organizational outcomes.

Despite these limitations, this study provides valuable insights into the role and characteristics of servant leadership within the Church of Christ in Thailand. The findings provide practical guidance for church leaders seeking to enhance their effectiveness and promote long-term sustainability, as well as contribute to a deeper understanding of leadership dynamics within a religious context.

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