

# Influence of professionalism on organisational performance of Christian Organisations Research Advisory Trust of Africa (CORAT Africa), Kenya

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to assess the influence of professionalism on the organisational performance of the Christian Organisations Research Advisory Trust of Africa (CORAT), Kenya. The study employed a descriptive design. The study population comprised 60 CORAT Africa employees. The study employed the census approach, which entailed involving all members of the target population in the information-gathering course. A structured questionnaire was used and subjected to a pilot study to determine its validity and reliability. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to conduct the study, and tables were used to display the findings of the descriptive analysis. The independent variable on the dependent variable impact was examined using a regression model. The findings showed that professionalism had a positive correlation with organisational performance ( $r=0.669$ ). Additionally, the linear regression test showed that professionalism had a statistically significant influence on organisational performance. The study recommends that CORAT Africa should foster a culture of professionalism and provide platforms for knowledge sharing, creating mentorship programs, and establishing a system of fair and consistent consequences for violating professional standards within the organisation. The study will function as a theoretical framework for future research in the area and is expected to provide critical insights into the non-profit sector with the goal of creating empowering environments and providing proactive assistance to improve organisational performance.

**Key terms:** Christian organisations, Kenya, non-profit, organisational performance, professionalism.

## INTRODUCTION

Professionalism is an essential element of organisational performance. Personnel who exhibit excessive tiers of professionalism are extra devoted to their work and are much more likely to show off behaviours that contribute to the fulfilment of the organisation (Chen et al., 2019). Furthermore, professionalism can result in stepped-forward service first-class due to the fact expert personnel are much more likely to provide fine services to customers, resulting in accelerated client delight and loyalty (Rudolph et al., 2017) and is seen as an essential component in enhancing organisational performance (Gordijeh & Aghdaie, 2013).

Professionalism can improve team performance, and professional employees are more likely to work collaboratively and correctly with others, resulting in improved group performance (Leiter et al., 2015). Moreover, professionalism can help corporations in adapting to alternatives because professional personnel are more likely to participate in continuous mastering and improvement, which can assist groups in adapting to changing environments and last competition (Wang et al., 2019). Moreover, organisations that value professionalism in their lifestyle and practices have higher tiers of worker pride, lower turnover costs, and higher popularity amongst stakeholders (Cohen, 2016). Consistent with the literature, professionalism can improve organisational overall performance by increasing employee commitment, productivity, team overall performance, and organisational adaptability. However, studies on the connection between professionalism and organisational performance are lacking.

Christian Organisations Research Advisory Trust of Africa (CORAT Africa) has faced several challenges over the last five years, according to its Strategic Plan (2020-2024), including the loss of some highly professional employees to competitors, low student enrolment due to changes in Kenya's educational system, low bed occupancy, and stiff competition from rival groups (CORAT Africa, 2020). CORAT Africa's performance has been hampered by declining cash flows, which have resulted in significant revenue deficits compared to projected budgets in recent years, making it difficult to meet the financial targets

outlined in the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan. Considering these challenges, CORAT Africa initiated efforts to change its corporate culture to improve its performance. However, it remained unclear whether such efforts had worked as expected. Hence, the study will look into the influence of professionalism on the organisational performance of CORAT Africa, Kenya.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In the USA, Shapiro et al. (2014) studied the significance of professionalism in the scientific field. They determined that a lack of professionalism and doubtful behavioural expectations can cause clinical mistakes, unfavourable occasions, and dangerous operating situations. In reaction, Brigham and Girls' Clinic (BWH) in Boston mounted the Centre for Professionalism and Peer Help (CPPS) in 2008. CPPS carried out numerous projects, inclusive of professional improvement training, a system for disclosure and apologies, peer and defendant help and health projects. Management assistance, clear behavioural expectations, conversation and engagement education, and a method for addressing professionalism concerns were credited with the program's success. According to the study, thousands of health practitioners have received professional development training to detect, prevent, and control unprofessional behaviour since 2005. Issues have been raised by approximately 201 physicians/scientists and 8 healthcare groups on January 1, 2010, and June 30, 2013. The findings discovered that mandatory schooling sessions were powerful in promoting a stepped-forward professionalism tradition, and the tactics for responding to professionalism issues had been powerful in addressing and positively changing repetitive unprofessional behaviour. Universal, the consequences of the look suggest that enforcing a comprehensive professionalism program can bring about improved patient safety and a more positive work environment within the medical field.

Hussin et al. (2018) conducted a study to evaluate the relationship between instructors' professionalism and task satisfaction. The authors covered research from Malaysia, China, and Saudi Arabia, amongst others. The study aimed to offer a comprehensive understanding of the subject by reviewing literature from numerous countries with unique educational

structures and cultural contexts. The authors had been able to provide a broader attitude on the connection between professionalism and process pride inside the teaching profession with the aid of including research from numerous nations. The study observed a link between teachers' professionalism and job satisfaction. According to the study, teachers who exhibit high levels of professionalism, as well as knowledge and abilities, moral behaviour, and a commitment to lifelong learning, are more likely to be content with their jobs. The study emphasised the significance of providing instructors with a professional work environment in order to improve their professionalism and activity satisfaction.

Agustina and Saxena's (2022) study in Indonesia discovered that teacher professionalism and major supervision have a big effect on trainer overall performance, as evidenced by the analysis of statistics amassed from 31 trainer respondents using an SPSS application. The study found that teacher professionalism and principal supervision both had a substantial effect on the performance of teachers at a senior high school (SMA Negeri 2). Control competence, democratic supervision, and optimistic supervision all have a significant effect on instructor performance, according to the findings. The authors emphasised that instructors are expected to be experts who prepare and administer the learning method, investigate studying outcomes, and offer advice and preparation and that the basic supervision variable had an impact on trainer performance. The study concluded that expert heritage, improvement of learning resources, character competency, ICT and research skills, social competence, professional publishing, and mirrored image all have an effect on teacher performance. Based entirely on the analysis and findings, the study concluded that trainer professionalism and primary supervision have an effect on teacher performance. The higher a teacher's overall performance, the more professional they may be in carrying out their responsibilities, and the more emphasis the principal places on supervision. Control competence, principals as supervisors, and democratic, comparative, and constructive supervision have all been found to have a significant impact on the performance of teachers in the classroom.

In Uganda, Kaawaase et al. (2020) tested the joint results of professionalism on the connection between intellectual capital (IC) and the overall performance of small and medium audit practices (SMPs) in Uganda. A 77 SMPs questionnaire survey registered with the Institute of Licensed Public Accountants of Uganda via their dealing with companions was used in the study, and a couple of regression analysis was used to test hypotheses utilising focused variables and an interplay term between IC and professionalism. According to the findings, IC is a significant predictor of SMP performance in Uganda, whereas professionalism alone is not. However, the observer discovered that professionalism interacts with IC to improve SMP performance and identify barriers, such as a lack of publicly available published economic statements for SMPs, which can make the facts less objective. Moreover, the study is restrained to SMPs in Uganda, which may additionally limit the findings' generalisability. This study provides significant empirical evidence relating to the relationship between professionalism, IC and SMP overall economic performance in developing countries, indicating that while IC affects firm overall performance independently, its interaction with professionalism improves firm overall performance.

In Tanzania, Mrope (2017) carried out a study to investigate the influence of procurement professionalism on the performance of the general public procurement function. Using a variety of research strategies, information was gathered and analysed from a sample of 100 Tanzanian public entities. According to the findings, adherence to procurement professionalism aided the overall performance of the procurement feature in Tanzanian public entities significantly. To that end, the study recommended that Tanzanian procurement departments be staffed with properly and professionally certified personnel. The study also recommended additional research to identify other factors influencing the performance of government entities' procurement capabilities. The examination emphasises the critical role of procurement professionalism in public procurement departments in public entities.

Existing studies indicate that professionalism can enhance overall organisational performance.

However, there are several gaps in our knowledge of these relationships and the role of management in fostering professionalism that must be filled. To begin, most studies have focused on specific industries such as banking, health, education, coverage, auditing, procurement, textile, media, and entertainment, limiting their findings' generalisability to other industries. More research in various fields is needed to investigate how professionalism influences organisational overall performance across a wide range of industries in order to close this gap. Finally, research into the relationship between culture, professionalism, and organisational performance is required. Finally, while existing research indicates a high-quality relationship between professionalism and overall organisational performance, there are significant gaps that need to be filled. Extra research was required to cover a wide range of industries, establish standardised professionalism definitions and measurements, and investigate the precise management behaviours that contribute to professionalism and its effects on performance. Furthermore, those research efforts need to be expanded to the non-profit sector to learn more about the specific dynamics of professionalism in the aforementioned setting.

## METHODOLOGY

### Data

The research was carried out at CORAT Africa, located along Bogani East Road in Karen, Nairobi. The organisation works with churches and church-related organisations with the purpose of helping them improve their management capabilities. This research sought to understand how professionalism influences the performance of organisations, mainly in non-profit organisations. A descriptive research design founded the methodology of this study. Since the target population was small, the study employed the census approach, which entailed involving all members of the target population in the information-gathering course. Therefore, 60 employees in CORAT Africa were engaged in this study.

A questionnaire was used with open - and closed-ended questions. The open- and closed-ended questions were used to gather both qualitative and quantitative data, resulting in data triangulation that aided in answering the research question. Open-ended questions collected qualitative data that provided detailed information about organisational performance in terms of professionalism. Closed-ended questions were the collected quantitative data for statistical analysis of the relationship between study variables, whereas open-ended questions were analysed by coding and categorising the responses into meaningful themes. The closed-ended questions primarily used Likert scales.

### Validity and Reliability Tests

A pilot test was done to ensure data accuracy. In the pilot test, 6 respondents were used in the study. This was done to prevent data contamination. This number was chosen because it meets the 10 per cent threshold and was suitable for piloting. The selected respondents were given questionnaires to answer, and their responses were used to test the validity and reliability of the research.

The Cronbach alpha method was used to analyse the pilot test data to determine the questionnaire's reliability. According to Taber (2018), this test computes the internal consistency of the scale measuring a particular variable and gives a consistency coefficient between 0 and 1. A coefficient that is equal to or greater than 0.7 suggests that the scale has a high level of consistency, while a lower alpha indicates that the instrument needs adjustment. The Cronbach alpha method was suitable for the study because the questionnaire comprised a Likert scale for each variable. An alpha was computed for each scale; thus, 2 dominant coefficients were reported. The test was done using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). As shown in Table 1, the results revealed a Cronbach Alpha coefficient value of 0.834.

**Table 1: Reliability Test**

| Variable        | Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardised Items | No of items |
|-----------------|------------------|----------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Professionalism | .834             | .817                                         | 6           |

On the other hand, to ensure that the research instrument was valid, the study employed three strategies. Firstly, questions were developed from the indicators in the conceptual framework, and the research supervisors provided their input to enhance content validity. The questionnaire was organised into sections that corresponded to every study variable, ensuring that all variables were sufficiently covered in the questionnaire to enhance construct validity. Finally, the effectiveness of the questionnaire was assessed in eliciting the necessary information (criterion validity). This approach helped to identify any ambiguities, redundancies or gaps in the questionnaire and refined the instrument before data collection. As a result of the validity tests, the necessary changes, amendments, or modifications were implemented.

The data collection procedure involved obtaining required research authorisation letters and permits from agencies such as the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) in Kenya. Thereafter, the researcher approached CORAT Africa, informed them about the study, and requested for permission to collect data from staff members. Upon receiving the approval, the researcher informed the staff about the study, administered the questionnaires and received the submissions after one week.

All respondents were informed about the study, its benefits and potential risks, and their right to decide whether to participate and asked to participate on a voluntary basis. No respondents were coerced or pressured to participate. To promote privacy, the researcher collected the questionnaires from the respondents, who were instructed not to write any information on the questionnaire that could reveal their identity, such as names, positions in the organisation, telephone numbers, or staff numbers. Codes were used in the reporting of qualitative data so as to keep the respondents anonymous. All information obtained from external sources was cited inside the text, and the complete bibliographic details about the source of the information were provided in

the list of references to avoid plagiarism. The document was also subjected to a plagiarism check. Further, the researcher maintained objectivity throughout the study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data gathered from the survey was sorted out through cleaning and coding into a computer for analysis in the form of descriptive and inferential statistics with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics was in the form of central tendencies and variability measures (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Descriptive analyses are vital since they offer the basis, which leads to correlational and experimental studies; they also provide hints concerning the issues that must be engrossed on, leading to further studies (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2019).

The findings of the study show that sixty respondents participated in the study, and this number was enough for the generalisation of the findings. Among the respondents, 45 per cent were female, while 55 per cent were male, implying that gender disparity did not have an effect on the study's findings. Most of the respondents (per cent) were in the age bracket of 21-30 years.

The findings also show that all the respondents had attained post-secondary education, with over 60 per cent of the respondents having obtained at least an undergraduate degree level or higher. This implied that the respondents were literate and conversant with the research languages and, as such, capable of providing the responses that answered the research question.

Finally, regarding the demographic characteristics of the respondents, about 85 per cent of the respondents had worked in the organisation for one year and above, which implied a good understanding of the organisation's operations and performance in line with professionalism.

**Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

| Demographic Characteristics       | Category             | Percent (%) |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| Gender                            | Male                 | 55          |
|                                   | Female               | 45          |
| Level of Education                | Secondary            | 3.3         |
|                                   | Certificate          | 5.0         |
|                                   | Diploma              | 28.3        |
|                                   | Undergraduate Degree | 30          |
|                                   | Master's Degree      | 28.3        |
|                                   | PhD                  | 5.0         |
| Age of the respondents            | 21-30 years          | 36.7        |
|                                   | 31-40                | 31.7        |
|                                   | 41-50                | 15.0        |
|                                   | >50                  | 16.7        |
| Period worked in the organisation | < 1 Year             | 15.0        |
|                                   | 1-3 Years            | 38.3        |
|                                   | 4-6 Years            | 25.0        |
|                                   | > 7 years            | 21.7        |

## Professionalism and Performance of CORAT Africa

The study evaluated the analysis of professionalism on the performance of CORAT Africa. The results are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3: Professionalism and Performance of CORAT Africa**

| Statement                                                                                              | 5  | 4  | 3  | 2  | 1 | Median |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|----|----|----|---|--------|
| My organisation encourages continued training                                                          | 14 | 18 | 20 | 5  | 3 | 4      |
| I feel a real 'calling' to my profession                                                               | 25 | 24 | 6  | 5  | 0 | 4      |
| The dedication of people in my organisation is gratifying                                              | 13 | 31 | 10 | 5  | 1 | 4      |
| My fellow colleagues have a pretty good idea about each other's competence                             | 11 | 25 | 14 | 8  | 2 | 4      |
| In my organisation, when problems arise at work, we are given the opportunity to use our own intellect | 7  | 18 | 23 | 7  | 5 | 3      |
| Any employee who violates professional standards faces fairly severe penalties                         | 13 | 15 | 13 | 13 | 6 | 3      |

From Table 3, the professionalism variable was operationalised into six sub-predictor variables. Descriptive statistical analyses showed that 53.3 per cent agreed that their organisation encourages continued training while many of them 81.7 per cent; feel a real calling to their profession. While 73.4 per cent of the respondents agreed that the dedication of people in their organisation is gratifying, at the same time, 60 per cent of them feel that their fellow colleagues have a pretty good idea about each other's competence. A total of 41.7 per cent of the respondents agreed that their organisation gives them an opportunity to use their own intellect when problems arise at work, and similarly, 43.3 per cent agreed that in their organisation, any employee who violates professional standards faces fairly severe

penalties. This implies that professionalism in an organisation is considered an important Corporate Culture facet that influences organisational performance. The findings confirm earlier studies by Agustina and Saxena (2022) found that teacher professionalism and principal supervision both had a significant impact on teacher performance at a senior high school.

## **Correlation between Professionalism and Organisational Performance**

This study sought to understand the extent of the relationship between professionalism and organisational performance at CORAT Africa. The findings are indicated in Table 4.

**Table 4: Correlation Matrix**

|                            |                     | Organisational Performance | Professionalism |
|----------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| Organisational Performance | Pearson Correlation | 1.00                       | .669            |
|                            | Sig. (2-tailed)     |                            | .017            |
|                            | N                   | 60                         | 60              |
| Professionalism            | Pearson Correlation | .669                       | 1.00            |
|                            | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .017                       |                 |
|                            | N                   | 60                         | 60              |

This study found that professionalism had a robust positive correlation of  $r=0.669$  ( $<0.05$ ) with organisational performance at CORAT Africa. This implied that professionalism had a statistically significant relationship with organisational performance.

## Influence of Professionalism on Organisational Performance

A regression analysis was used to establish how professionalism influences organisational performance at CORAT Africa, Nairobi County. The regression method tested the influence of the predictor variable on the response variable. The analysed findings were

presented in frequency tables since they were user-friendly and gave a graphical representation of the varied responses from the respondents.

The linear regression model used is presented below:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$$

Where,

$Y$  = Organisational Performance

$X_1$  = Professionalism

$\beta_0$  = Constant term

$\beta_1$  = Beta coefficients

$\varepsilon$  = Error Term.

**Table 5: Model Summary**

| Model Summary                              |                   |          |                   |                                |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| Model                                      | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. The error of the Estimate |
| 1                                          | .821 <sup>a</sup> | .674     | .652              | .638                           |
| a. Predictors: (Constant), Professionalism |                   |          |                   |                                |

The R-value of 0.821 indicates that there was a strong positive and linear relationship between the dependent and independent variables. The coefficient of determination showed that approximately 67.4 per cent of the variance in the dependent variable of organisational performance was explained by the predictor of professionalism. After adjusting the predictors, the findings showed that 65.2 per cent of

the variance in organisational performance was still explained. This penalised the inclusion of unnecessary predictors and showed a more conservative estimate of the model's goodness of fit. This showed that the model's predictions were reasonably accurate. Moreover, the Analysis of Variance was tested, and the results are shown in Table 6.

**Table 6: Analysis of Variance**

| Model                                           |            | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F      | Sig.              |
|-------------------------------------------------|------------|----------------|----|-------------|--------|-------------------|
| 1                                               | Regression | 21.568         | 3  | 7.189       | 13.825 | .000 <sup>b</sup> |
|                                                 | Residual   | 29.134         | 56 | .520        |        |                   |
|                                                 | Total      | 50.702         | 59 |             |        |                   |
| a. Dependent Variable: Organisation performance |            |                |    |             |        |                   |
| b. Predictors: (Constant), professionalism      |            |                |    |             |        |                   |

The F-statistic is 13.825, and it has an associated p-value of .000, which is very close to zero ( $p < 0.05$ ). These findings implied that the regression model is statistically significant. This indicates that professionalism, as a predictor, has a statistically

significant influence on organisational performance. Finally, the results of regression coefficients are presented in Table 7.

**Table 7: Regression Coefficient of Professionalism on Organisational Performance**

| Model |                 | Unstandardised Coefficients |            | Standardised Coefficients | T     | Sig. |
|-------|-----------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
|       |                 | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |       |      |
| 1     | (Constant)      | .508                        | .490       |                           | 1.035 | .005 |
|       | professionalism | .169                        | .097       | .195                      | 1.747 | .036 |

a. Dependent Variable: Organisation performance

Fitting the equation into the model:

$$\text{Organisational Performance} = 508 + 161(\text{Professionalism}) + \epsilon$$

The findings indicate that for each one-unit increase in professionalism, the predicted change in performance is .169. The low p-value (<0.05) indicates that professionalism has a statistically significant influence on organisational performance.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

**Conclusion:** Employees reported that their organisation encourages continued training, fosters a sense of calling to their profession, finds satisfaction in dedication, values competence among colleagues, allows the use of intellect in problem-solving, and

imposes penalties for violations of professional standards. These findings feature the significance of professionalism as a facet that influences organisational performance. Professionalism had a statistically significant relationship with organisational performance, and it was also a statistically significant predictor of organisational performance.

**Recommendation:** This study suggests that enhancing professionalism within the organization can be achieved by providing platforms for knowledge sharing, implementing mentorship programs, and establishing a system of fair and consistent consequences for violating professional standards.

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