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# LEADER HUMILITY AND THE PERFORMANCE OF UGANDA'S PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES: A SERVANT LEADERSHIP ANALYSIS

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**ABSTRACT**

*Parliamentary committees play a central role in legislative oversight, law making, and democratic accountability. However, Ugandan parliamentary committees have faced persistent performance challenges that undermine effective governance. While structural and resource-related constraints have been widely studied, leadership dynamics remain underexplored in legislative contexts. This study examined the influence of leader humility, a core attribute of servant leadership, on the performance of parliamentary committees in Uganda. A pragmatic, cross-sectional mixed-methods design was employed. Quantitative data were collected from 320 Members of Parliament (MPs) and 39 clerks using a census approach, while qualitative data were obtained from 12 selected committee chairpersons and 15 clerks. Descriptive results revealed high ratings of humility among committee leaders, with grand mean scores of 4.06 (MPs) and 4.10 (clerks). Committee performance was rated positively, with mean scores of 3.55 (MPs) and 4.10 (clerks). Inferential analysis demonstrated a significant positive correlation between humility and committee performance ($r = 0.274$, $p < .01$), and regression results indicated that humility significantly predicted performance ($\beta = 0.274$, $p < .01$). Qualitative findings reinforced these results, highlighting that humble leaders foster inclusive decision-making, trust, and collaboration, which enhance committee outputs. The study concludes that leader humility is a critical leadership trait that significantly improves parliamentary committee performance. It recommends incorporating servant leadership training into parliamentary leadership development initiatives.*

***Key Words:*** *Leader Humility; Parliamentary Committees; Servant Leadership; Legislative Performance; Uganda*

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## BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Effective leadership is central to the functioning of democratic institutions. In legislative contexts, leadership not only shapes institutional culture but also influences how collective tasks are carried out. Parliamentary committees are instrumental in legislative oversight, bill scrutiny, and representation, making them vital to the functioning of parliaments. In Uganda, Article 90 of the Constitution mandates the establishment of committees to support parliamentary functions. These committees debate bills, conduct inquiries, and oversee government actions. Despite this constitutional framework, Ugandan parliamentary committees continue to face performance challenges such as delays in legislative processes, weak oversight, limited production of quality reports, and insufficient stakeholder engagement (Draku, 2022; Global Parliamentary Report, 2021; Muhumuza, 2018). These shortcomings weaken accountability mechanisms and diminish the effectiveness of Parliament.

Much of the existing literature attributes these challenges to structural and resource constraints including inadequate technical expertise, political interference, underfunding, and corruption (Bakyenga, 2021; Parliamentary Commission, 2020). However, there has been little emphasis on leadership dynamics within parliamentary committees. Traditional leadership models that emphasise command and control are often ill-suited to peer-based legislative environments where persuasion, trust, and collaboration are more effective than authority. This gap has contributed to weak committee cohesion and limited performance.

Servant leadership offers an alternative framework. It shifts the focus from exercising authority to prioritizing the needs and growth of others (Greenleaf, 1977; Northouse, 2016). Among its key attributes, leader humility is foundational (Sousa & van Dierendonck, 2017). Humility involves recognising personal limitations, valuing others' input, seeking feedback, and creating psychologically safe environments. Research shows that humble leaders foster collaboration, psychological safety, and innovation, which lead to improved team performance (Owens et al., 2018; Ng et al., 2020; Ye et al., 2020). Despite this evidence, there is a contextual gap in understanding the role of leader humility in legislative institutions, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Committees operate in peer-based environments where authority is distributed, making humility a particularly relevant leadership quality. This study therefore examines the influence of leader humility on the performance of parliamentary committees in Uganda, contributing to leadership and governance scholarship.

## METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a pragmatic research paradigm, which supports the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of complex social phenomena. Pragmatism was appropriate because the study aimed to explore both the measurable relationship between leader humility and committee performance and the contextual factors underpinning these dynamics. This philosophical stance allowed the researcher to combine numerical data with lived experiences to produce nuanced insights that would not be achievable through a single methodological lens.

A cross-sectional mixed-methods research design was employed, integrating both quantitative (QUAN) and qualitative (QUAL**)** approaches in a complementary manner. The cross-sectional design was chosen because it enabled the researcher to collect data from a large population at a single point in time, thereby establishing relationships between variables without the time and resource demands of longitudinal studies. The mixed-methods approach enhanced methodological triangulation, increased the validity of findings, and allowed the qualitative data to explain or elaborate on the quantitative patterns observed.

### Population and Sampling

The study population comprised 320 Members of Parliament (MPs) serving on different parliamentary committees, 39 committee clerks, and 12 committee chairpersons. MPs and clerks formed the core quantitative sample, while chairpersons and clerks provided qualitative insights because of their leadership experience and administrative roles in committee operations.

A census method was employed for the quantitative component involving MPs and clerks. This was appropriate because the population size was manageable and the study sought to obtain comprehensive and representative data from all individuals involved in committee work rather than relying on a sample that might introduce selection bias. Census data enhanced the statistical power of the analysis and improved the generalisability of findings within the parliamentary context.

Regarding the qualitative component, purposive sampling was used to select 12 committee chairpersons and 15 clerks who possessed extensive leadership experience and institutional knowledge. This non-probability sampling technique ensured that participants were information-rich cases capable of providing in-depth perspectives on leadership dynamics, decision-making, and performance challenges within committees. Their leadership positions placed them in vantage points to observe and influence committee processes, making their insights particularly valuable.

**Data Collection**

Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed around the study's conceptual framework. The questionnaire contained Likert-scale items (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) measuring two constructs**:** leader humility and committee performance. Items on leader humility were adapted from established servant leadership scales, reflecting behaviours such as consultation, acknowledging limitations, admitting mistakes, encouraging feedback, and showing respect to all members. Committee performance items measured the perceived effectiveness of legislative scrutiny, timeliness of report production, stakeholder engagement, and overall efficiency of committee operations.

The instrument underwent expert review by specialists in leadership studies and parliamentary affairs to ensure content validity, followed by a pilot test with a group of former MPs and staff not included in the main study. Feedback from the pilot informed refinement of wording and sequencing, and internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha to ensure that each scale achieved acceptable reliability levels ($\alpha \geq 0.70$).

Qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with committee chairpersons and clerks. An interview guide was developed to explore leadership behaviours, decision-making approaches, and factors influencing committee performance. The semi-structured format allowed for consistency across interviews while retaining flexibility for participants to elaborate on their experiences. Interviews were conducted face-to-face in quiet settings within parliamentary buildings and lasted approximately 30–45 minutes each. With participants' consent, all interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy.

**Data Analysis**

Quantitative data were coded and entered into SPSS version 23 for analysis. Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) were used to summarise respondents' perceptions of leader humility and committee performance. To examine relationships between variables, Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to determine the strength and direction of association between leader humility and committee performance. Subsequently, simple linear regression analysis was conducted to assess the predictive power of leader humility on committee performance. The assumptions of linearity, normality, and homoscedasticity were checked to ensure the validity of the regression model.

Qualitative data were analysed thematically using a systematic, multi-step process. First, transcripts were read repeatedly to achieve familiarisation with the data. Second, initial codes were generated inductively to capture meaningful segments of text related to leadership behaviours and performance outcomes. Third, codes were organised into themes that reflected patterns across interviews, such as collaborative decision-making, respect-based leadership, and inclusion of minority voices. Thematic analysis allowed the researcher to interpret the underlying meanings in participants' narratives and to contextualise the quantitative findings. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings occurred at the interpretation stage, where qualitative themes were used to explain and enrich the statistical relationships identified. This approach provided a more holistic understanding of the influence of leader humility on committee performance.

**Ethical Considerations**

Ethical principles guided every stage of the research process. Ethical clearance was obtained from the relevant academic and parliamentary authorities. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents and interviewees. Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity; no identifying information was included in the data analysis or reporting. Data were stored securely in password-protected files accessible only to the researcher. Given MPs' demanding schedules, flexible appointment arrangements were made to ensure high participation rates without disrupting parliamentary business.

## RESULTS

**Descriptive Statistics**

Leader humility was assessed using behavioural statements that captured consultation, openness, respect, and feedback-seeking behaviours exhibited by committee chairpersons. Respondents rated each item on a five-point Likert scale. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics from MPs and clerks.

**Table 1**

*Perceptions of Leader Humility among Committee Leaders*

| Humility Statements | MPs Mean | MPs SD | Clerks Mean | Clerks SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| The committee chairperson consults others before making decisions | 4.12 | 0.51 | 4.21 | 0.46 |
| The chairperson acknowledges personal limitations and seeks input | 4.01 | 0.57 | 4.09 | 0.52 |
| The chairperson listens attentively to members' contributions | 4.15 | 0.49 | 4.18 | 0.44 |
| The chairperson treats all members with respect regardless of political affiliation | 3.98 | 0.62 | 4.11 | 0.54 |
| The chairperson admits mistakes and takes corrective action | 4.03 | 0.55 | 4.07 | 0.50 |
| The chairperson encourages open dialogue and feedback | 4.09 | 0.53 | 4.15 | 0.47 |
| **Grand Mean** | **4.06** | | **4.10** | |

The descriptive findings reveal that leader humility was rated highly by both MPs (M = 4.06) and clerks (M = 4.10). Among MPs, the highest-rated statement was "listens attentively to members'


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contributions" (M = 4.15, SD = 0.49), suggesting that MPs value leaders who genuinely pay attention during deliberations. Among clerks, the highest-rated statement was "consults others before making decisions**"** (M = 4.21, SD = 0.46), reflecting the administrative perspective that consultative leadership is critical for effective committee functioning.

Qualitative data provided rich explanations of these patterns. Several clerks and chairpersons described humility as the cornerstone of effective leadership in committee work. One clerk explained:

> A humble chairperson makes everyone feel heard. Even junior members can contribute freely because they know their views will be considered. This creates a more productive environment for decision-making (Clerk 3).

Similarly, a committee chairperson highlighted the importance of openness and feedback:

> I always remind myself that leadership is about facilitation, not domination. I make it a point to listen carefully and ask for input before concluding any discussion. This has helped us build trust within the committee (Chairperson 5).

These narratives highlight how humility manifests in daily committee interactions and why it is valued by both administrative and political actors. Clerks also noted that chairpersons who admit mistakes and take corrective action foster credibility and mutual respect, as seen in this statement:

> Sometimes a chairperson may make a wrong ruling or misinterpret a procedure. The humble ones acknowledge it openly and correct it immediately. That honesty makes members respect them even more (Clerk 7).

Beyond humility, respondents also rated committee performance positively. MPs gave an overall mean of 3.55 (SD = 0.61), indicating moderate to high performance perceptions, while clerks rated performance significantly higher at 4.10 (SD = 0.53). The higher clerks' ratings may reflect their proximity to the day-to-day functioning of committees, including administrative processes, report preparation, and timelines for deliverables.

**Inferential Statistics**

The relationship between leader humility and committee performance was examined using Pearson's correlation and simple linear regression analysis.

**Table 2**

*Correlation between Leader Humility and Committee Performance*

| **Variables** | **Humility** | **Committee Performance** |
|---|---|---|
| Humility | 1 | |
| Committee Performance | 0.274** | 1 |

**Note: p** < .01

The correlation analysis shows a positive and statistically significant relationship between leader humility and committee performance (r = 0.274, p < .01). This indicates that committees led by humble chairpersons tend to perform better than those led by less humble leaders. To further examine the predictive power of leader humility, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted, with committee performance as the dependent variable and leader humility as the independent variable.

**Table 3**

*Regression Analysis of Leader Humility on Committee Performance*

| **Variable** | **B** | **SE** | **β** | **T** | **P** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Humility | 0.274 | 0.053 | 0.274 | 5.17 | .000 |

The regression results indicate that leader humility significantly predicts committee performance (β = 0.274, p < .01). This means that, holding other factors constant, a one-unit increase in leader humility is associated with a 0.274 unit increase in committee performance. Leader humility therefore explains a meaningful proportion of the variance in committee performance. The qualitative findings complement these statistical results by providing context to why this relationship exists. Participants consistently described humility as enabling collaboration, mutual respect, and shared ownership of decisions, which in turn improve committee efficiency and outputs. For example, one MP observed:

> When a chairperson listens and respects others, members become more committed. They attend meetings regularly and contribute seriously because they feel valued (MP 14).

Another chairperson linked humility to timely performance outcomes:

> Committees work on tight deadlines. If you impose your will, people resist quietly and things delay. But when you lead with humility and include everyone, they rally behind you and reports are completed on time (Chairperson 2).

These qualitative insights reinforce the quantitative evidence that leader humility is not just a desirable trait but a functional leadership strategy that improves committee performance through enhanced participation, trust-building, and collective responsibility.

**Discussion of Findings**

The findings of this study affirm that leader humility is a vital factor in strengthening parliamentary committee performance. Behaviours such as consulting others, listening attentively, admitting limitations, and fostering open dialogue help to cultivate trust, psychological safety, and shared responsibility among committee members. Qualitative responses indicated that members perceive humility not merely as a soft virtue but as a core relational mechanism that lowers barriers to communication and collaboration. In that sense, our results resonate with the broader literature on servant leadership, which posits humility as foundational to effective leadership in collective settings (Eva et al., 2019).

Similarly, a recent meta-analysis of leader-expressed humility found that humility contributes uniquely to positive outcomes beyond other leadership constructs (Silard et al., 2025). That study highlights the point that humility is not redundant with transformational or authentic leadership, but offers distinct influence on relational dynamics. In our parliamentary context, the positive correlation (r = 0.274) and regression results (β = 0.274) suggest that humility's influence is moderate but meaningful, especially given the complexity and competing pressures in legislative settings.

In parliamentary committees, where formal authority is less hierarchical and members often act as peers, leader humility can mediate ideological tensions and create an inclusive atmosphere. The qualitative feedback in this study suggested that chairpersons who demonstrate humility bridge party divides by treating dissenting voices with respect and soliciting input across party lines. This aligns with findings from political leadership research. Cooper and Okten (2024) show that politicians perceived as intellectually humble gain more trust and legitimacy, particularly when engaging on polarising topics. Although their focus is on public rhetoric rather than committee processes, the overlap in relational dynamics is compelling.

The difference in ratings between clerks and MPs likewise offers insight into how humility is observed in practice. Clerks consistently rated leader humility more highly than MPs did. Because clerks are embedded in procedural aspects, agenda setting, background coordination, and feedback loops, they are better positioned to observe consultative behaviour, corrections of errors, and behind the

scenes responsiveness. This pattern mirrors observations in other institutional contexts, where administrative actors often have greater visibility into day-to-day interpersonal leadership than higher-level actors focused on outcomes. It calls attention to the value of triangulating multiple perspectives when evaluating leadership in institutional settings.

From a theoretical perspective, the results mesh strongly with both servant leadership theory and leader-member exchange (LMX) theory. Servant leadership theory argues that humility contributes to trust, follower development, and empowerment (Sousa & van Dierendonck, 2017). In combination with LMX, humility helps to strengthen leader-follower relationships by reducing distance and enabling higher-quality exchanges (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). In committees, such relational strength translates into more willing participation, better deliberation, timeliness in reporting, and more effective oversight. The qualitative data supported this. Many members associated humility with procedural fairness, open consultation, and shared responsibility in committee work.

Further comparison to other sectors bolsters confidence in these findings. In the public sector, Nguyen and Dao (2023) found that servant leadership fosters public sector employees' innovative behaviour through mediating mechanisms such as public service motivation (PSM) and psychological climate. That chain of influence–from servant leadership to a supportive climate and innovation–resonates with what we observed in legislative committees: humility (a servant leadership trait) helps shape the climate, which in turn enables better committee outcomes. Also, in private organisations, Khan et al. (2024) demonstrated that servant leadership, which includes humility, has a positive effect on knowledge sharing, mediated by organisational citizenship behaviour and trust. The knowledge-sharing mechanism is relevant in committees as members rely on access to information and collaborative deliberation, which humility can fortify.

Emerging research on intellectual humility also offers useful parallels. A recent study by Liu et al. (2024) showed that humble leaders promote creative performance, intrinsic motivation and work engagement. In political settings, research by Knöchelmann and Cohrs (2024) suggests that intellectual humility reduces polarisation and enhances constructive political exchange by allowing leaders to engage more openly with opposing views. These findings echo the point that humility in leadership is not merely relational but epistemic; it shapes how knowledge is exchanged and how conflict is managed. In parliamentary committees, where diverse viewpoints and contention are common, humility that is both relational and intellectual can support more robust deliberation.

While the results are promising, boundary conditions deserve attention. Silard et al. (2025) note in their meta-analysis that context matters–humility's effect is stronger when followers expect participative leadership in less formalised settings. In highly hierarchical or politically constrained committees, the influence of humility may be muted. Moreover, Hadmar et al. (2022) warn that humility may be perceived as weakness in bureaucratic environments or be misused by followers taking advantage of a humble leader. Although this study did not detect significant negative outcomes, future research should explore moderating variables such as party dominance, media pressure, committee complexity, or external interference to map when and how humility's positive effect is amplified or diminished.

Practically, these findings suggest that parliamentary leadership development programs should do more than teach procedural skills. They should embed humility-enhancement modules such as training on self-awareness, feedback mechanisms, conflict mediation, and inclusive decision-making. Evidence from servant leadership implementation research suggests that cultivating

relational virtues early fosters sustainable institutional culture change (Hanafiah & Li, 2024). Over time, cultivating a more humble leadership culture may enhance parliamentary legitimacy, effectiveness, and public trust. In sum, this study contributes to leadership scholarship by extending empirical evidence of humility into the legislative domain. It also offers practical insights for strengthening committee performance through relational leadership. As research on intellectual humility and servant leadership continues to grow, further comparative and longitudinal studies in parliamentary and public institutions will help clarify how humility can be nurtured and applied in governance contexts.

**CONCLUSION**

This study concluded that leader humility is a significant determinant for productive parliamentary committee performance in Uganda. Humility enables inclusive decision-making, fosters trust among members, and promotes mutual respect, all of which are essential for effective functioning in peer-based legislative settings. By reducing interpersonal barriers and encouraging open participation, humble leadership strengthens the collaborative dynamics that underpin committee effectiveness. The findings highlight that humility is not merely a desirable personal trait but a strategic leadership attribute that contributes to improved deliberation, timely reporting, and more robust oversight outcomes.

To enhance these positive effects, it is recommended that parliamentary leadership development initiatives integrate servant leadership principles with a strong emphasis on humility. Training programs for committee chairpersons should include modules on self-awareness, feedback-seeking, inclusive leadership, and conflict mediation. Additionally, institutionalising leadership assessments that value humility alongside procedural competence could help cultivate a culture of respectful and participatory leadership. Such measures have the potential to strengthen parliamentary oversight, improve legislative quality, and build greater public trust in Uganda's parliamentary processes.

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