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The Moderating Effect of Leadership Behaviour/Performance on the Relationship between Creativity, Innovation and Sustainable Church Growth

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Abstract

Leaders adopt innovative and creative approaches to make sure their organizations stay relevant amid the challenges posed by rapid technological advancement and globalization. The study explores the ways in which innovative practices, creativity, and leadership behavior influence organizational growth focusing on church settings in Lagos, Nigeria. A cross-sectional survey design was used to collect information from 337 church leaders from various denominations. Statistical analysis revealed positive relationships between leadership behavior, creativity, and innovation, underscoring their impact on church growth. The effects of creativity and innovation on sustainable growth of church organization were found to be moderated by leadership behavior, highlighting the need for church leaders to foster innovative strategies. The study provides useful insights for enhancing leadership effectiveness and adds to the limited body of research on organizational growth within church settings. This research offers suggestions for promoting innovation and creativity in church organizations, such as utilizing technology, fostering an inclusive environment, and promoting creativity. Furthermore, the study has important implications for church leaders aiming to adapt to innovative dynamics while maintaining their organizational mission and values.

Keywords: Church growth; Creativity; Innovation; Leadership behavior; Organizational Growth

Introduction

Creativity has become the catchphrase in the corporate world and across various organizational context. The rapid pace of global change presents leaders with confronting challenges that cannot be solved through conventional means [1,2]. Currently, in an interconnected world, leaders are compelled to adopt relevant, proactive and creative approaches to navigate global issues, and economic demands with its advancement in technology [3]. Creative thinking has emerged as an important tool in leadership, driving individuals to explore opportunities and foster innovation [4]. Leaders who think creatively, act strategically, and implement change are better equipped to address complex organizational problems [5]. Such leaders leverage imaginations to direct novel goals and solve intricate problems within various organizational structures [6,7]. As such, creativity and innovation are predicted to be a primary driver of organizational growth in the future [8].

The growing global interest in creativity and innovation is closely tied to advancement of technology, and heightened competitiveness [9]. Creative thinking enables individuals to adopt diverse perspectives and synthesize new ideas [10]. It is both the process and outcome, characterized by connecting past experiences and generating novel solutions or behavior [11]. Leaders act as catalyst for change, utilizing creative thinking to drive transformation, improve performance, and foster innovation [12]. Innovation emerges as a direct result communication playing a critical role in the process [13]. Solving novel, complex, and ill-defined problem creatively requires an iterative process of problem definition, idea generation and strategic implementation [14]. Divergent and convergent thinking play essential roles in these steps, enhancing the quality creative process. Thus, cultivating a culture that values creativity within the organization [15].

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted church organizations, forcing them to adapt creatively and innovatively to maintain operations and connect with congregants [16,17]. According to Cole (2015), churches face substantial challenges in engaging with increasingly secular societies, often constrained by the growing demands of members. Addressing these challenges requires church leaders to adopt creative and innovative strategies to sustain their mission and maintain relevance. However, the interconnected, unpredictable, and complex nature of modern society has rendered traditional approaches insufficient for many church leaders, who now face challenges similar to those experienced by corporate organizations [18].

Creative thinking and leadership are interconnected, providing critical tools for decision-making, conflict resolution, problem-solving in church contexts [19]. For example, during the COVID-19 lockdowns, many churches embraced innovative technologies to conduct virtual services and engage members [16]. Church leaders contribute to their organizational growth through imaginative and transformative leadership that fosters harmony and innovation [13].

Despite the growing recognition of creativity and innovation in organizations, there is limited research on their specific roles within church organizations. Previous studies have examined church commitment in fostering innovation [16], optimism regarding creativity [20] and innovation competency among church leaders [21]. However, direct research on the influence of leadership behavior and performance

on creativity and innovation in church organizations remains scarce. This gap highlights the need for focused studies exploring how church leaders deploy innovation to address organizational challenges and promote sustainable growth. The study aims to investigate the moderating effect of leadership behavior and performance on the relationship between creativity, innovation and church growth. This research provides a novel perspective and addresses a significant gap, by focusing on church organizations.

Theoretical Framework

Creativity is closely interrelated and interconnected to problem solving [22], focusing on generating useful ideas. It encompasses problem identification, generating, evaluating and implementing ideas [23]. Creativity enhances creative performance by stimulating individual's thinking skills [24]. Innovation is an outcome of creativity which involves introducing of a new product, service, or processes through a certain business model into the organization. It includes product innovation, process innovation, marketing innovation and organizational innovation [25].

Leadership Behavior and Sustainable Growth of Church Organizations

The development of church organizations depends on leadership behaviour that shape organizational culture and motivates team members. Church leaders that exhibit flexible and leadership styles have impact on organizations' operational performance as well as the development of growth friendly environments [26]. Effective leadership combines strategic planning, interpersonal dynamic and vision to accomplish organizational objectives [27-29]. Leaders in church organizations need to demonstrate a dedication to responsibility and developing team members abilities. Additionally, how effectively an organization responds to challenges and changes is frequently determined by the actions of its leaders [30,31]. For instance, their followers are more likely to be committed and perform better when visionary leaders are able to convey a compelling objective [32]. Employee retention, contentment, and the alignment of organisational goals with community needs are other factors that moderate the relationship between leadership behaviour and organisational growth [33]. Church leaders can promote innovation, boost congregational participation, and enhance overall organisational performance by putting a strong emphasis on transformational leadership [34,35].

H₁: There is a significant positive effect between church leadership behavior/performance and the sustainable growth of church organization.

Incorporating Creativity in Sustainable Growth of Church Organizations

The application of Creative Problem-Solving, which include structured stages like mess finding, idea generation, and solution implementation, enable leaders to effectively address challenges [9]. Creative thinking fosters unique solutions that align with organisational missions and community needs, promoting sustainable growth. Additionally, creativity in church settings can manifest in diverse ways, developing innovative programs that resonate with contemporary audiences [36,37]. Encouraging creativity among team members and congregants can inspire

new ideas that enhance organisational relevance and community impact [16]. Furthermore, fostering creativity involves creating a psychologically safe environment where individuals feel empowered to share their ideas [38]. Creativity also contributes to problem solving, which enables church organizations to respond to evolving needs dynamically and address challenges such as resource limitation [39], thus cultivating a culture that promotes creativity [40].

H₂: There is a significant positive effect between creativity and the sustainable growth of church performance.

Incorporating Innovation in Sustainable Growth of Church Organizations

Innovation transforms creative ideas into a workable plans and solutions. Leaders who prioritize innovation and support innovative practices in organizations ensure a stable adaptability to changes [41,42]. In church contexts, innovation may involve the use of technology, to improve church programs and implement novel community programs [43,44]. For example, adopting digital platforms for virtual programs, can greatly improve accessibility and engagement [45]. Innovation also encompasses process improvements such as streamlining administrative tasks or introducing new approaches to volunteer engagement [46]. Furthermore, innovation practices can help church organisations address social and environmental shifts, ensuring they remain relevant and impactful [47,48]. Leaders who fosters a culture of innovation often encourage experimentation and risk-taking, recognizing that some initiatives may not succeed but can still provide valuable learning experiences [49], by integrating strategic priorities, church leaders drive growth, enhance may boost operational efficiency, and strengthen their organizational impact [50], making innovation is essential for sustainable growth [51].

H₃: There is a significant positive effect between incorporated innovation and sustainable growth of church organization

Leadership Behavior and its Influence on Creativity and Innovation

Leadership behavior directly influences the integration of creativity and innovation within organisations. Participative and transformational leadership styles create environments that empower team members to contribute innovative ideas and collaborate on creative solutions [23]. Leaders act as catalysts for creativity by providing resources, fostering collaboration, and aligning innovative efforts with organizational values. In church organisations, leaders who encourage open communication and inclusive decision-making processes are more likely to cultivate a culture of creativity and innovation [52]. Such leaders also play a critical role in removing barriers to innovation, such as resistance to change or fear of failure [53]. Additionally, leadership behavior shapes the extent to which creativity and innovation are embedded in the organization's strategic objectives and daily operations [54]. By modelling innovative thinking and demonstrating a willingness to explore new possibilities, leaders inspire their teams to embrace a similar mindset [55]. The synergy between leadership behaviour, creativity, and innovation contributes to the organisation's capacity to adapt, thrive, and achieve its mission in a complex and dynamic environment [56].

H₄: There is a significant moderating effect of leadership behavior/performance on the relationship between creativity/innovation and the sustainability growth of church organizations

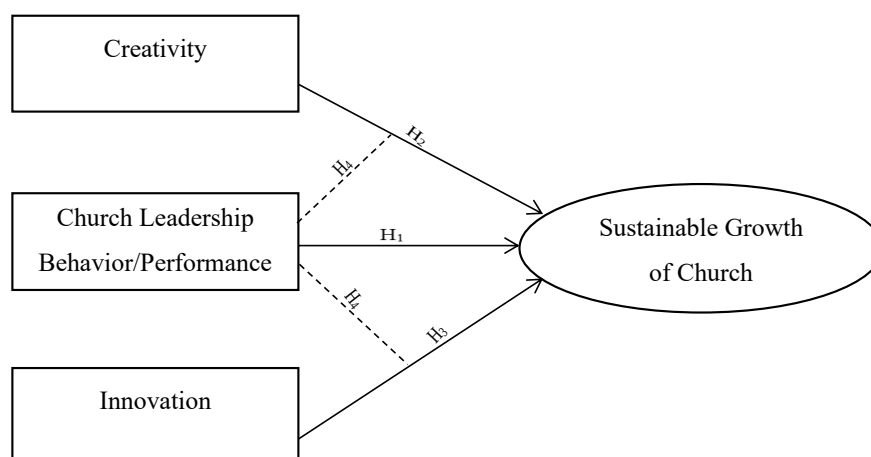


Figure 1. Theoretical Model; dot line representing moderating effect and line arrow representing positive effect.

Methods

Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research design, using cross-sectional survey method to gather data from church organizations in Lagos states, Nigeria. The design allows for the examination of correlations between leadership behavior, creativity, innovation, and organizational growth. This study integrates a deductive approach, testing hypotheses grounded in the theoretical framework.

Population and Sampling

The target population comprises church leaders identified in this study as individuals who assume leadership and managerial roles, including departments heads, administrators, and members of workforce responsible for overseeing church operations and involved in decision-making across various church organizations. A multistage sampling technique was adopted. Initially stratified sampling ensured representation across different denominations (e.g Catholic, Protestant, Pentecostal). This is followed by simple random sampling within each stratum to select individual respondents.

The total population for this study comprises 2,075 churches in Lagos state [57]. Each church has at least one leader which forms the target population sampling. Since the study focuses on church leaders, we aim to sample individuals representing their respective churches. Thus, the sampling strategy is designed to

capture a sufficient number of church leaders while ensuring that the sample reflects the diversity across the church organizations in Lagos.

Sample size determination

To determine the appropriate sample size, we use Cochran's formula. A population of 2,075 church leaders are considered at given a 95% confidence level, where the margin of error is 5%.

$$n = \frac{N \times X}{X + N - 1} (z_{\alpha/2} \cdot p(1-p)) / MOE^2 \quad n = \text{sample size,}$$

p = proportion of sample
MOE = margin of error
N = Population size

$z_{\alpha/2}$ = The critical value of the normal distribution at a $\alpha/2$ (for a confidence interval level of 95%, α is 0.05 and the critical value is 1.96)

Thus, $N=400$, $p=0.5$, $MOE=0.05$, and $z_{\alpha/2} = 1.96$

$$X = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.5(1 - 0.5)}{0.05^2}$$

$$X = 384.16$$

$$n = \frac{2075 \times 384.16}{384.16 + 2075 - 1}$$

$$n = 324.28$$

Adjusted sample size: 324.

To account for potential non-responses such as incomplete or missing data, a 10% oversampling was applied:

$$324 + (0.10 \times 324) = 324 + 32.4 = 356.4$$

Final target sample size: 337 church leaders.

Data Collection Process

The data was collected from the respondents using a structured questionnaire from May – October, 2024. The survey was distributed online and in person to church organizations across the designated sampling strata in Lagos State. Ensuring ethical compliance, informed consents was obtained from all the participants before data collection begins. Respondents' anonymity and confidentiality were prioritized with data stored securely and used solely for research purposes

Instrument Development

The research instrument is a structured questionnaire developed based on previous studies [8, 21, 58-60] to measure key variables of leadership behavior, creativity, innovation, and organizational growth. The questionnaire was adapted to fit the church context and was subjected to reliability and validity tests. Following the data collection, fifty (50) random cases were selected to test the validity of the responses and to ensure clarity and efficiency of the survey items. The Cronbach's Alpha was

used to assess the internal consistency of the items in each section of the questionnaire. A reliability score of 0.907, 0.951 and 0.947 indicated strong internal consistency of the construct measuring creativity incorporated in the church organization, innovation incorporated into church organization and organizational growth of the church respectively.

The questionnaire is divided into six (6) sections (socio-demographic information; church leadership behavior and performance; incorporate creativity in church organization; incorporated innovation in church organization; organizational growth of the church and church leadership) corresponding to the study's key variables. Participants are asked to respond to each item on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

To reduce potential biases and ensure anonymity, the survey was anonymized, with respondents asked to indicate their church denomination rather than their specific church name. Respondents were encouraged to answer truthfully without fear of judgment. Follow-up reminders were sent, to improve response rates, and data collection was closely monitored for completeness.

Statistical Analysis

The data were analyzed descriptively using SPSS. Hypothesis were tested using inferential statistics, including Pearson correlation and regression analysis, with a significance level of $p < 0.05$. Hierarchical regression was also utilized to explore interaction effects between leadership, creativity and innovation.

Ethics approval and consent to participate

The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the Institutional Review Board of NEAR EAST UNIVERSITY (NEU/SS/2024/1761 and 15.03.2024). Additionally, informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to administering the research questionnaire.

Results

Socio-Demographic Information of Participants

The demographic information of respondents such as age, gender, years of experience, educational level, denomination of church, years of serving in church, employment outside church and leadership position were obtained. The distributions of the responses are shown in table 1.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Information of Respondents (n=337)

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18 – 25	53	15.73
	26 – 30	98	29.08
	31 – 40	157	46.58
	40 and above	29	8.61
Gender	Female	163	48.37
	Male	174	51.63
Level of Education	Bachelors	95	28.19
	Masters' degree	122	36.20
	Ph.D. degree	64	18.99
	Others	56	16.62
Denomination of Church	Anglican	31	9.20
	Apostolic	66	19.58
	Baptist	44	13.06
	Catholic	32	9.50
	Evangelical	12	3.56
	Pentecostal	128	37.98
	Protestant	24	7.12
Years of Serving in Church	Less than a year	30	8.90
	1-5 years	71	21.10
	6-10 years	120	35.60
	More than 10 years	116	34.40
Employment outside Church	Yes	270	80.10
	No	67	19.90
Leadership Position	Administrative department	24	7.12
	Clergy	16	4.75
	Coordinator	8	2.38
	Evangelism Department	43	12.76
	Hospitality Department	37	10.98
	Media/Technical Department	36	10.68
	Music Department	76	22.55
	Prayer Department	49	14.54
	Ushering Department	48	14.24

Table 1. shows the personal demographic information related to the respondents. Based on respondents' age bracket, 53(15.73%) were within age 18 – 25 years, 98(29.08%) were within the age 26 – 30 years, 157(46.58%) were within age 31 - 40 years and 29(8.61%) were of age greater than 40 years. This implies that larger percent respondents were within 31- 40 years. Also, 48.37% of the total respondents were female while the remaining 51.63% were male. Furthermore, the respondents' level of education shows that 28.19%, 36.20% and 18.99% were Bachelor's degree holders, Masters' degree holder, and Ph.D. degree holders respectively, while 16.62% have other degrees. As shown in the table above the domination of church of the respondents varies across, 31 respondents attend Anglican, 66 attends apostolic, 44 attends Baptist, 32 attends Catholic, 12 attends Evangelical, 128 attends Pentecostal, while 24 attends Protestant church domination thus, a larger percent 128 (37.98%) of the total respondents attends Pentecostal church. Furthermore, 30(8.90%) of the respondents have been serving in the church less than a year, 71 (21.10%) have been serving within 1 – 5years, 120 (35.60%) have serving within 6 – 10 years while 116 (34.40%) have been serving for more than 10 years. Majority of the respondents 270 (80.10%) have another employment outside the church. Lastly, the leadership position held by the respondents varies across administrative department (7.12%), Clergy (4.75%), Coordinator (2.38), Evangelism Department (12.76%), Hospitality Department (10.98%), Media/Technical Department (10.68%), Music Department (22.55%), Prayer Department (14.54%) and Ushering Department (14.24%) which are well define in the table 1.

Structural Model Evaluation

Regression analysis was employed to evaluate the factors contributing to the church organization's growth. The result of the model is presented in the table below.

Table 2. Factors Contributing to Sustainable Church Organizational Growth

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	0.921 ^a	0.8491	0.8477	0.416775	1.960286

a. Predictors: (Constant), innovation, leadership_behaviour, creativity

Table 2 shows the regression model summary. The model explained 84.91% of the variance in the sustainable organizational growth of the church ($R^2 = 0.8491$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.477$). This suggests that the predictors (Innovation, Creativity and leadership behaviour/performance) are significant contributors to sustainable church organizational growth.

Table 3. Predictors of Sustainable Church Organizational Growth

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	325.3886	3	108.4629	624.4226	0.000 ^b
Residual	57.84245	333	0.173701		
Total	383.2311	336			

b. Predictors: (Constant), innovation, leadership_behaviour, creativity

The ANOVA test in table 3 shows that the model was statistically significant $F(3,333) = 624.42$, $p < 0.01$ indicating that the predictors (Innovation, Creativity and leadership behaviour/performance) can collectively explain a significant amount of variation in sustainable church organization growth. The effect is explained in the coefficient table of the model in table 3.

Table 4: Regression Coefficients for Predictors of Sustainable Church Organizational Growth

Predictors	Unstandardized Coefficients	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients	t	P-value	Collinearity Statistics	
	B		Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	0.2903	0.0776		3.7409	0.0002		
Creativity	0.2097	0.0595	0.2165	3.5261	0.0005	0.1203	8.3159
leadership behaviour	0.1549	0.0564	0.1523	2.7464	0.0064	0.1475	6.7807
Innovation	0.5588	0.0550	0.5771	10.1515	0.0000	0.1402	7.1301

Dependent Variable: church organization growth

Table 4 presents the coefficient effect of the regression model explaining factors contributing to church organizational growth. Creativity ($\beta=0.2903$, $p < 0.01$), leadership behavior/performance ($\beta=0.1549$ $p < 0.01$) and innovation ($\beta=0.5588$, $p < 0.01$) significantly predict church organization growth however, innovation had the strongest positive effect while leadership behaviour/performance had the lowest positive effect. The model suggests that creativity and innovation are critical factors of organizational growth in church organization followed by leadership behaviour/performance thus churches aiming for sustainable growth should encourage creativity and innovation strategies as well as foster strong leadership practices.

4.3. Hierarchical Regression

This model was considered in this study to measure how leadership moderates the effect of creativity and innovation on growth while controlling for the interaction between creativity and leadership and innovation and leadership.

Table 5. Interaction Effects on Leadership, Creativity and Innovation on Sustainable Church Growth

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	0.932 ^a	0.868	0.867		0.38913	
2	0.932 ^a	0.869	0.867		0.39010	1.913

a: Predictors: (Constant), leadership, creativity, innovation: b; Predictors: (Constant), leadership, creativity, innovation, creativity_leadership, innovation_leadership

Table 5 shows the model summary considering the interaction of leadership, creativity, and innovation. The adjusted R² (0.867) revealed that the variation in church organization growth explained by the predictors does not statistically increase even after controlling for the effects of interaction however, the predictors could explain 86.9% of variation in organizational growth.

Table 6. Moderating Variables on Sustainability of Church Growth

Model	Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	332.8088	3	110.9363	732.6476	0.000 ^b
	Residual	50.42229	333	0.151418		
	Total	383.2311	336			
2	Regression	332.8608	5	66.57216	437.46809	0.000 ^c
	Residual	50.37027	331	0.152176		
	Total	383.2311	336			

The ANOVA test in table 6 shows that the initial model was statistically significant F (732.6476), $p < 0.01$ indicating that the one of the predictors ((Innovation, Creativity and leadership) can explained a significant amount of variation in church organization growth. The second model following that the effect of moderating variables is considered into the existing model was also found statistically significant. The effect in final model is explained in the immediately preceding coefficient table.

Table 7. Predictors and Moderating effects on Sustainable Church Growth

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	0.2576	0.0710	3.6266	0.0003		
	Creativity	0.1739	0.0503	0.1796	3.4594	0.0006	6.8200
	Innovation	0.4382	0.0531	0.4526	8.2517	0.0000	7.6144
	Leadership	0.3163	0.0416	0.3346	7.5932	0.0000	4.9153
2	(Constant)	0.2109	0.2073	1.0172	0.3098		
	Creativity	0.0836	0.1904	0.0863	0.4392	0.6608	97.2958
	Innovation	0.5414	0.1876	0.5591	2.8857	0.0042	94.5451
	Leadership	0.3338	0.0749	0.3531	4.4578	0.0000	15.8045
	creativity_leadership	0.0252	0.0513	0.1717	0.4920	0.6231	306.8291
	innovation_leadership	-0.0297	0.0517	-0.2035	-0.5739	0.5664	316.6433

Table 7 presents the coefficient effect of the regression model explaining factors contributing to church organizational growth. The first model shows that Creativity ($\beta=0.1739$, $p<0.01$), innovation ($\beta=0.4382$, $p<0.01$) and leadership ($\beta=0.3163$, $p<0.01$) significantly predict church organization growth however, innovation had the strongest positive effect while leadership had the lowest positive effect. Following that, moderating variables which is the interaction of leadership and creativity and innovation were introduced into the initial model and show that the interaction between leadership and creativity has a positive effect ($\beta=0.0252$) while the interaction between leadership and innovation has a negative effect ($\beta=-0.0297$) however this effect are not statistically significant as their p-values is above 0.05 level of significant. Also, as the moderating effect was introduced into the existing model the effect of creativity was not statistically significant ($p=0.6608$). Thus, the initial model (Figure 1) is sufficient to predict the organization growth of the church.

*Correlational Analysis***Table 8.** Correlation between Church Leadership Behaviour/Performance and Church Organization Growth

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	Remark
Church Leadership Behaviour/Performance $\bar{X}$	337	3.393	1.0499	0.866**	0.00	Significant
Church Organization Growth	337	3.432	1.0680			
Incorporated Creativity $\bar{X}$	337	3.381	1.1025	0.883**	0.00	Significant
Church Organization Growth	337	3.432	1.0680			
Incorporated Innovation $\bar{X}$	337	3.413	1.1030	0.911**	0.00	Significant
Church Organization Growth	337	3.432	1.0680			
Church Leadership Behaviour/Performance $\bar{X}$	337	3.393	1.0499	0.920**	0.00	Significant
Creativity/Innovation	337	3.400	1.0800			

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Figure 2 and Table 8 show a correlation co-efficient of 0.866, indicating a strong relationship between Church Leadership Behaviour/Performance and Church Organization Growth with a calculated p-value of 0.00 at an alpha level of 0.05. Based on this, H_1 is therefore supported. Hence, the strong correlation suggests improvements in church leadership behaviour/performance contribute to church growth. Additionally, the correlation coefficient 0.883 between Incorporated Creativity and Church Organization Growth, with a p-value of 0.00 (2-tailed), indicates a significant relationship at the 0.05 level, indicating that H_2 is supported. This strong correlation suggests that increased incorporated creativity drives church growth. The correlation results between incorporated innovation and church organization church. The coefficient correlation 0.911, indicating a strong positive relationship between the innovation and organizational growth in churches. The Sig (2-tailed) value of 0.00 indicates the relationship is significant. Therefore, H_3 is supported, concluding that churches with strong innovation strategies may be more effective in fostering organizational growth in church. Finally, the correlation between church leadership behaviour/performance and creativity/innovation shows a correlation coefficient of 0.920, indicating that an extremely strong positive relationship. This relationship is significant at the 0.05 level of significant suggesting that leadership behaviour/performance has a substantial impact on creativity and innovation.

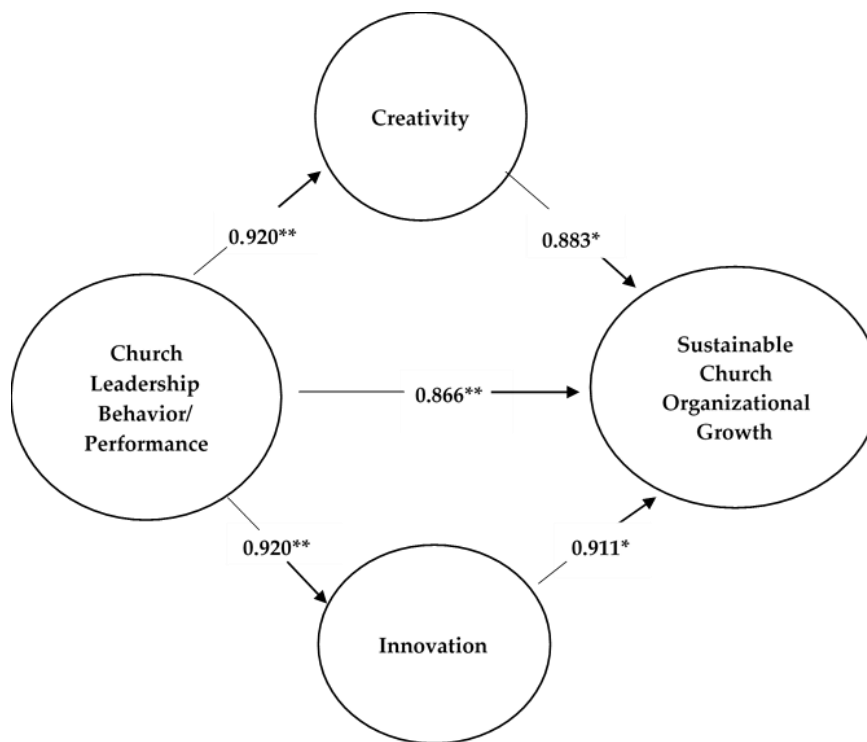


Figure 2: Correlational Model; Correlation is significant at 0.01 level

Discussion

This study explores the level of readiness for innovation and creativity and how Christian leaders deploy innovation skills for solving problems in church organizations. Thus, a well-structured questionnaire was employed to elicit information from the target population using various statistical techniques to evaluate the response and drawing valid information needed to achieve the aim and objectives of the study.

Results revealed that a larger number of the survey participants are leading and empowering members as well as encouraging their members to develop their own ideas. This affirms that Leadership means an expression of behavior that influences an individual's attitudes and behaviors and interaction between groups for the motive of achieving goals [61,62]. Also, results revealed that the larger percent of the respondents seek out and promote creative and innovative thoughts in order to solve problems in the church. The study attests to that the participants used different leadership styles which include controlling, directing, indeed all techniques and

methods used by leaders to motivate individuals to follow their instructions [26, 63, 64].

Furthermore, the creativity incorporated in various churches to foster organization growth. Strategies that are needed to enhance growth are set in place in fulfilling the organization growth and this was affirmed by a significant number of the participants. Huang et al., (2022) in a study affirmed that Creativity is predicted to be a primary driver of organizational growth in the future. Among the creativity process attest by the respondents include applying innovation through technology to carry out church projects, imploring creative ideas into church activities, providing funding to support activities related to creativity and creating, acquiring and transferring of new knowledge are part of the church culture [8]. Creativity involves the creative phases of identifying and constructing problems, idea generation as well as evaluating, selecting and implementing ideas to solve issues in different organization [65,66].

In addition, this study assesses the innovation incorporate in church organization showing that a larger number of the respondents were positive about innovation incorporate in their various churches. All the items directed towards identifying the innovative strategies incorporated in the church organization were affirmed to be present in several churches. Thus, the innovation generated, developed and implemented enhances the sustainability of church growth. Innovation entails action intended to provide economic value of any organization [25]. Among the measures put in place to foster innovation in church environment include motivation, existence of innovation team, provision of good work climate for innovation development and continual improvement of project. Innovation during the lock-downs caused by the COVID'19 pandemic was used to spread the gospel and carry out church activities virtually [48, 67].

Furthermore, the implication of creativity and innovation in church organization is sustainable growth. The measures put to facilitate growth includes effective project control of the church projects, managing of resources and proper allocation, effective strategic planning, developing an efficient risk management and many more however, all these measures are determined by leader of organization as leadership plays a vital role in facilitating an organizations' goal [13,68]. The ability of the leaders to innovate may be necessary for the Christian institutions to operate well in terms of membership expansion, financial stability, technological advancement, and development initiatives [21, 69].

In previous studies, it has been identified that creativity and innovation in organizations are essential for sustainable growth [70,71]. However, the concept of leadership serves as moderating factor between them. Leaders are catalyst in bringing change to organizations and an effective leader increase organizational performance and to meet the need for transformation [59]. Similarly, the experience of church leaders on innovation competency it was shown that the church leader expressed the role of technology in youth evangelism enhanced new program [72,73].

Also, this present study revealed that there is a strong positive relationship between Church Leadership Behavior/Performance and Church Organization Growth. Thus, this support that creative leadership generates results that are enduring, pertinent,

and transformative [74] through coordinating and managing dynamic teams to work together and have an influence on the church organization growth [13]. Incorporated creativity and innovation are positively related to church organizational growth, that is an increase in creativity and innovation result to the growth of the church. In other studies, creativity and innovation are predicted to be a primary driver of organizational growth. Therefore, the impact of creativity and innovation cannot be over emphasized in church organization [75].

This study also explored how leadership moderates the effect of creativity and innovation on growth while controlling for the interaction between creativity and leadership, and innovation and leadership however, results show that as moderating effect was introduced into the existing model the effect of creativity was not significant therefore, the regression model was sufficient. Creativity, innovation and leadership behavior/performance are significant determinant of church organization growth as revealed in this study. Although the innovation was the most significant factors among all the predictors considered in this study thus, Church leaders are expected to engage individuals with innovative and creative ideas in which things can be done differently to foster church growth.

6. Conclusions

The study demonstrates how important creativity and innovation are fundamental drivers for the sustainable growth of church organizations. It has shown that creativity and innovation are not just desirable traits but also essential for effective church leadership, particularly promoting growth and ensuring long-term relevance.

Leadership behavior plays a pivotal role in fostering an environment that promotes innovation and creativity. Innovation was found to be the most important predictor of sustainable organizational growth, and the study showed strong positive relationships between leadership behavior, creativity, and innovation. Additionally, it is important for church organizations to employ technology to enhance engagement and operations. Initiatives advance organizational objectives while aligning with creative and innovative efforts. In a changing climate, church organizations can grow sustainably and maintain their resilience.

6.1. Limitations

This study offers valuable insights into the role that creativity, innovation and leadership play in fostering the sustainability of church growth. The study relied on self-reported data collected through structured questionnaires. Although this approach allowed for an efficient data collection from a sizable sample, this approach is susceptible to potential biases like response accuracy and social desirability. Respondents may have provided responses they believed to be positive rather than reflecting their genuine experiences or opinions. Employing mixed-methods approaches, including qualitative research or observational techniques, could enhance the reliability and depths of the results.

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