# The Role of Leadership Competencies in Enhancing Team Performance and Project Success: Evidence from NGOs in Şanlıurfa

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## Abstract

This study investigates the impact of leadership competencies on team performance and project success within civil society organizations operating in Şanlıurfa, Turkey. Located near the Syrian border, Şanlıurfa plays a critical role in humanitarian response due to its large refugee population. A mixed-methods research design was adopted. The quantitative phase involved structured surveys administered to 300 staff members (including managers, officers, and field workers) in both local and international NGOs. The qualitative phase consisted of two focus group discussions with senior managers to gain deeper insights. The study focused on three main constructs: leadership competencies, team performance, and project success. Statistical analyses, conducted using SPSS, included descriptive statistics, reliability testing via Cronbach's alpha, Pearson correlation, and linear regression. The analysis demonstrated strong internal reliability across scales ($\alpha$ = 0.81 to 0.88). Regression results showed that leadership competencies significantly predict project success ($R^2$ = 0.62, $p < 0.01$) and team performance ($R^2$ = 0.59, $p < 0.01$). Qualitative findings reinforced these results, highlighting emotional intelligence, participative decision-making, and adaptability as key leadership traits in humanitarian contexts. This study seeks to address a critical gap in the literature on humanitarian project management by linking leadership competencies with organizational outcomes. It offers both theoretical contributions and practical recommendations, emphasizing the importance of targeted leadership training and culturally competent management to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of humanitarian interventions in complex field environments.

**Keywords:** Leadership Competencies, Team Performance, Humanitarian Organizations, Şanlıurfa, Emotional Intelligence.

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## 1. Introduction

It is said that leadership of project management has emerged as one of the critical factors in establishing the outcome of a project, whether successful or not, especially in a complex and dynamic environment of many stakeholders, resource constraints, and ever-changing priorities. Researchers have reiterated that project success cannot be solely attributed to the merit of planning or the availability of resources; rather, it stands to a large degree on the ability of the project leader to motivate the team, coordinate properly, manage risks, and make timely decisions (Turner & Müller, 2005; Geoghegan & Dulewicz, 2008) .

These last few years have lent themselves toward redefining the standards of leadership within the purview of the project context.  Simply put, the completion of a project on time and budget is no longer sufficient for evaluating success. Quality, stakeholder satisfaction, and team engagement have emerged as central indicators of effective leadership. As per the Project Management Institute, there exist three domains of competencies possessed by project leaders (PMI, 2018). They are: technical competencies (time and scope management), behavioral competencies (leadership, motivation, communication), and contextual competencies (understanding the work environment and organizational culture). This broadening of horizon marks a turning point in the understanding of the leader's role from merely carrying out tasks to being the strategic influencer for the overall outcome of the project.

The project leader's competence would closely connect with the outcome achieved by the team. Ideally, motivational skills, clarity of vision, their ability to delegate tasks, and communicate effectively will help foster cohesive and productive teams. Research shows that leaders with high emotional intelligence, adaptability, and resilience in the face of stress produce better results from their teams (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2005; Müller & Turner, 2010).

In a local context, Şanlıurfa is a unique case for studying this relationship. Positioned on the Turkish-Syrian border, this city is housing more than half a million refugees and is an important hub for humanitarian and developmental organizations engaged in hundreds of projects every year in sectors like education, livelihoods, relief, and women's empowerment. These projects involve culturally and gender-diverse teams, adding yet another layer of complications for leadership and team management.

Unfortunately, many of these projects are finding themselves subject to poor coordination, implementation delays, and low completion rates, according to both local and international reports (Sauter, 2024).  These reports reveal one of the chief causative factors as the weak leadership competencies of project managers, followed by their inability to adopt contemporary management approaches relevant to the humanitarian setting.

Thus, the study aims to investigate the relationship between leadership competencies and team performance and project success. The central question posed in this regard is: Where does the competence of a project leader exert influence upon team performance and thus project success within organizations working in Urfa? In this context, what are the competencies with utmost importance associated with success indicators?

Apart from making an important theoretical contribution, it will build a bridge between efficient leadership and project success in today's humanitarian environment. An applied dimension is introduced by giving forward-looking recommendations to project managers, training, and capacity-building institutions about what can be done to support an effective process of leader selection and how leaders' competencies can be grown and enhanced through appropriate training models which are practical under the realities of fieldwork in Urfa.

## 2. Background on Organizations in Şanlıurfa and Nature of Their Projects

Şanlıurfa is among the most active regions in Türkiye when it comes to humanitarian and community development work. This is due largely to its border location with Syria and the acceptance of a sizeable number of Syrian refugees since 2011. Such a reality has generated greater humanitarian and development needs, thus placing the city in a city where several NGOs and international organizations have key entry points to lend support in a variety of areas, including education, protection, food security, health, economic empowerment, and social inclusion (UNHCR, 2023).

Diverse institutions occupy the Şanlıurrfa landscape themselves: from small local NGOs working directly with communities, to expansive international institutions like the Turkish Red Crescent, Islamic Relief, and several UN-associated Agencies. Projects in implementation have differed widely: emergency programs meant to address immediate needs and development projects that aim at strengthening the capacities of host and refugee communities in the long term. Nevertheless, project management in Urfa is repeatedly challenged despite a significant scale of humanitarian action. The prominent challenges are multiple partnerships and coordination mechanisms, poor resources, heavy reliance on external donors, and high turnover of staff, whether due to work pressure or low salaries. All these challenges, therefore, call for effective leadership to steer amidst daily challenges with efficiency and adaptability (Slim, 2015) .

## 3. Rationale and Objectives of the Study

In addition, the diversity of backgrounds among staff within these organizations compounds the problems faced by project directors. Project teams tend to comprise people from various nationalities, cultures, and languages. Hence, leaders should possess advanced skills for managing multicultural teams, solving internal conflicts, and communicating effectively with diverse

stakeholders, including donors and beneficiaries. Recent fieldwork has established that certain projects failed not for lack of resources or unfeasible planning but rather for lack of competent leadership to navigate through the complex atmosphere of the field environment (Missoni & Alesani, 2023) .

Thus, under the circumstances, there is an urgent need to study project leadership competencies in organizations working in Urfa, to enhance, in a theoretical perspective, the understanding of the leadership concept within the humanitarian sector, and also to provide practical solutions for increasing performance effectiveness and improving project outcomes in one of Türkiye's most important humanitarian response areas.

This study is structured to understand the dynamics regarding project leader competency, team performance, and project success in the operational sphere of civil society organizations active in the city of Şanlıurfa. This topic has also emerged from the academic and field need stiffening. Literature reportedly depicts that diversified competencies among leaders lead to high teamwork and sustainable outcomes (Geoghegan & Dulewicz, 2008; Müller & Turner, 2010).

Thus, the aim of this study will include the following:

1. To analyze the link between project leader competencies and team performance by evaluating the effect of motivation, conflict management, and efficient communication in leadership skills on the quality of interaction and performance execution in teams.
2. Investigate the impact of leadership competencies on project success; i.e., achieving objectives, the satisfaction of stakeholders, and the sustainability of project benefits.
3. Identify the most effective leadership competencies in understanding the humanitarian context of Urfa, taking into consideration the special nature of obstacles encountered by local organizations, like cultural diversity, limited funding, and pressure of performing routine roles.
4. Provide practical action-oriented recommendations toward leadership development and capacity-building training designs in line with project types and those organizations operating within the region.

This dual theoretical and practical significance creates a research gap in the leadership literature on humanitarian projects through a scientifically based scrutiny using real-world field data. Further, its findings can be used to guide civil society organizations in Türkiye, especially in border areas facing on-and-off humanitarian issues, toward more impactful and effective service delivery. The importance significance adds on the possible view to the future changes in the nature of humanitarian work-from simply responding to crises into sustainable development approaches. This requires equipping project leaders with innovative skills to manage diverse teams and multidimensional projects in a rapid changing environment. Therefore, this study seeks to create

a practical entry point to further enhancing institutional performance by developing a deeper understanding of effective leadership competencies (Mintzberg, 2013; Lientz & Rea, 2016).

## 4. Research Problem

Even though civil society organizations across Türkiye, including in Şanlıurfa, have greatly improved their project management skills, the implementation of most projects still suffers from serious problems. Field evaluations have often pointed to recurring problems like delays in task completion, internal incoherence, high staff turnover, etc., and most of these challenges are often attributed to leadership competencies or lack thereof, especially in communication, motivation, and multicultural team management (Altunışık et al., 2007; Demir, 2006).

In project management literature, and leadership, a project's success is said to be tied not only to whether the project meets its technical objectives but also to the ability of the leader to bring about a cohesive and motivated team environment-hence, those factors become critical in measuring project performance: (Aga et al., 2016). This especially highlights a concern in the field of humanitarian work, where many external factors shape the project sites, such as fast-paced activity, multiple cultures, and resource constraints. In such places, leadership skills such as adaptability, participative decision-making, and conflict resolution would be necessary to find the best possible judgments under diverse circumstances (Tjosvold, 2008; Bozkurt et al., 2021).

Thus, this study investigates the relationship between the project leader skills and overall project success of civil society organizations working within Şanlıurfa. Core leadership competencies will be examined, namely: strategic thinking, emotional intelligence, motivation, conflict management, and practical planning. These are becoming mandatory competencies as they are important for project success or failure in complex transforming humanitarian settings (Avolio & Bass, 2004; Mete, 2022).

## 5. Research Questions and Objectives

Until now, many studies have been conducted regarding leadership competencies in the humanitarian sector, yet there remains a huge gap to fill regarding their role in influencing project outcomes in complex environments like Şanlıurfa. This area is diverse in terms of organizational cultures, is characterized by less financial support, and exists under other specific pressures brought about by humanitarian work in the field; thus, an essential case study for such an inquiry.

The central research thesis can be summarized in the following problem statement:

To what extent do the leadership competencies of project managers relate to improved team performance and the successful realization of projects in civil society organizations in Şanlıurfa?

In view of this main problem, the study aims to address the following research questions:

1. To what extent are the leadership competencies of project managers associated with team performance in civil society organizations in Şanlıurfa?

2. How do these competencies influence project outcomes in terms of quality, timeliness, and operational efficiency?

3. Which specific leadership competencies are most effective in the unique humanitarian and socio-cultural context of Şanlıurfa?

4. How do organizational factors such as organizational culture, funding levels, and fieldwork pressure influence leadership effectiveness?

5. What leadership models and practices can be adopted to improve the selection, orientation, and development of project managers in organizations functioning in Şanlıurfa?

If these questions could be answered, the study would fill the gap that has thus far existed in the literature, focusing on the technical and procedural aspects of project management and ignoring human-centered and managerial dimensions. This research, hence, would contribute toward a more holistic picture of project leadership in humanitarian contexts, offering several recommendations for enhancing performance at the organizational level in border areas of Türkiye (Kwak & Anbari, 2009; Gürbüz & Aykol, 2022).

## 6.  Theoretical Framework

### 6.1 Defining Project Leader Competencies:

There are some crucial elements to consider accompanying the merits of any project, especially its humanitarian and development dimensions; one of such is the prime consideration of the project leader. There is more to this than mere supervision; it includes an array of unique and deep skill sets commonly defined under the ambit of 'leadership competencies.

Project leader competencies might be crudely defined as those abilities possessed by a leader to coach a team toward good decision-making, proper resource allocation, and successful achievement of project goals. Numerous studies have shown that these competencies are more than just administrative tools; they are rather inseparably linked to the success or failure of a project, more so, in difficult and complex terrain like humanitarian work (Crawford, 2005; Müller & Turner, 2007).

PMI provided the key reference framework for mapping these competencies in three dimensions: first is the technical dimension, the ability to plan, organize, and analyze risks, thus allowing the project to be managed in terms of structure and execution. Second is the behavioral dimension; this is where the zone of interpersonal behaviors, such as motivating, building trust, conflict resolving, and communicating effective performance, is situated. Third is the contextual or the strategic dimension, which relates to the ability of the leader to comprehend broader project goals

such as institutional environment and relationship management with donors and the local community (PMI, 2017).

From this tri-dimensional perspective, one can acquire a deeper understanding of why research states successful leadership entails not only technical expertise, but also the ability to motivate the team, be flexible to daily challenges, and craft a positive working environment which fosters commitment and belonging (Aga et al., 2016; Geoghegan & Dulewicz, 2008).

In the local context of Türkiye, these competencies take on even greater importance in Şanlıurfa, which hosts a considerable number of humanitarian projects. The project leader is managing not only timelines and budgets, but also intercultural teams, culturally diverse target communities, and a whole set of complex local regulations that require very delicate navigation. Sarıçayır (2020) states that these project leaders in NGOs require additional skills that embrace understanding cultural diversity, developing good relationships with local communities, and adapting to changes in funding and other resources.

Recently, there has been an increasing volume of interest into modern models of leadership like transformational leadership and servant leadership. These approaches emphasize building trust, serving team members, and promoting participative methods of decision-making. The recent pieces of evidence have proven that translated modes of leadership are of considerable influence in project success since they promote higher levels of responsibility and team members' sense of belonging (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Eva et al., 2019).

## 6.2 The Relationship Between Leadership Competence and Team Performance:

Team performance is, indeed, a reflection of quality leadership and effective management in any project. Such a team is not organized and productive: it can be inferred that this is because the leader has genuine competencies related to dealing with people rather than just managing tasks. Studies have proved that a leader organizes the work and influences the morale of the team, commitment levels, and the ability to tackle everyday issues (Müller & Turner, 2010).

It is not exaggerated to say that the relationship between a leader and a follower extends from task delegation to a level where trust and development shine over genuine involvement in decision-making, inspiring the team leader in transformational leadership to dedicate an inspiring vision for team members and encourage their development both professionally and personally. Transformational leadership has yielded better outcomes, especially in projects that require continuous collaboration and sharing of innovations (Bass & Riggio, 2006)

According to Avolio and Bass (2004), the effectiveness of a leader does not only depend on the technical effectiveness of leadership but also stems from other factors like job satisfaction, empowerment, and role clarity within the team. These factors improve with a leader who understands and empathizes actively with the diversity of the team, listens attentively to the members, and appreciates their efforts .

On a local note, according to a recent study conducted by Gürbüz and Aykol (2022), leaders with a good grip over motivational skills, flexibility, and time management, are usually capable of reducing stress to better control teams during project implementation. Considering the complexity of regions such as Şanlıurfa, where a wide variety of peoples work in common under a most limited resource, the results of leadership absence could be visible in productivity falling and high employee turnover quite soon .

However, such an evaluation of leadership competence must not focus solely on the individual performance of a leader. Such a measure must be based primarily on the team's ability to achieve the goals set forth within the allocated deadline and the given budget. Tannenbaum and Salas (2020) added that the ability of teams, led by effective leaders, to cope with psychological and professional stability is due to a work environment characterized by mutual support, respect, and fairness.

## 6.3 Project Success Criteria

Proposing project success is a far deeper notion than just completing the project on time and keeping it within scope. Indeed, the definition of success in project management has changed over the years. Formerly, success depended on the so-called "iron triangle" of time, cost, and quality; nowadays, the assessment of success includes a number of other dimensions like beneficiary satisfaction, the sustainability of impact, and the performance of the project team itself (Ika, 2009).

Time and quality are still regarded as essential foundations in the PMBOK® Guide- the most commonly used reference in project management. These two elements are classified as "hard metrics," yet it is recognized that these alone cannot be used in a holistic evaluation in terms of success (PMI, 2017). A project could have finished technically, but achieved nothing since the team was withdrawn or the community targeted does not engage.

Many researchers argue that working in such humanitarian contexts, like the one in Urfa, is much broader than timelines and budgets. In such settings, it becomes crucial for leaders to manage change effectively, build trust with local communities, and respect cultural values. Bourne (2016) demonstrated that projects led by individuals who manage stakeholder relationships successfully tend to yield more sustainable outcomes in the long term-even when faced with financial or time constraints.

Most remarkable is the contribution by Shenhar et al. (2001), who recommended an integrated model that identifies success on four different levels, namely: short-term technical success: targets in time and budget being met; stakeholder and team satisfaction; impact on the executing organization; and long-term strategic impact of the project.

This framework conforms to findings from Mete (2022) in the Turkish context that civil society organizations will perform better where there harmonization between leadership style, team dynamics, and field conditions. For instance, a project can be technically finished, but the team should feel satisfaction, and the target community should engage positively with its outcomes. Such evolving definitions of success prompt project leaders, especially those from Urfa-based organizations, to adopt a more holistic vision. Competence is not simply about follow-through and execution anymore; it now includes relationship management, adaptability to challenges, and attaining a balance with institutional objectives versus individual needs. Hence, this is where the importance of leadership competencies becomes evident - not merely to achieve delivery but to attain success on a meaningful level that values people as much as numbers.

Leadership Theories and Models in Project Management Theories have made serious attempts to analyze leadership vis-à-vis project success as it affects leadership in a project. A theory is not just a philosophical initiative; it is but a means of moving closer to understanding behavior patterns in leadership and choosing the best style suitable for different team nature, stage of a project, and working environment.

One of the fundamental theories on which much research has been conducted is Transformational Leadership Theory, developed by Bass and Avolio. They think of the leader not exactly as someone who gets things done and efficient working methods employed, but as an individual who energizes this organization of teams and drives the members to grow and develop through compelling visions, individualized considerations, and modeling behavior. Much research shows that this type of leadership increases commitment and better performance quality in projects where flexibility and collaboration are required, as is to be found in the humanitarian sector (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Aga et al., 2016).

Servant Leadership Theory proposed by Greenleaf embodies a different principle known as 'service first.' According to this model, the leader neither demands authority nor seeks to empower team members. Rather, the leader listens to their needs and extends both moral and professional support. This principle is strongly related to the ethical values in humanitarian works and promotes an organizational culture characterized by values of trust, participation, and humility (Greenleaf, 1977; Eva et al., 2019) .

Another important theory is the Situational Leadership Theory as put forth by Hersey and Blanchard, which states that effective leadership is attained when leaders can modify their styles based on the maturity of their teams and situation of the project. In the early stages, a team may require high direction; whereas in further stages, empowerment and collaboration would be more effective. The theory is generally perceived as flexible and pragmatic-an ever-changing environment for example of humanitarian project (Thompson & Vecchio, 2009) .

Trait Theory is worthy of mention in this context. It attempted to highlight some common traits among effective leaders; such included: intelligence, self-confidence, ambition, adaptability, and so forth. Although the criticism against this theory arose because of the neglect of environmental and contextual issues, it still está helping value adding leadership assessments and selection processes, especially integrated with modern competency-based models (Zaccaro, 2007) .

Studies conducted in recent times begin to form localized leadership models in the Turkish context such as those developed by Koçel (2020), which emphasizes the need for leadership to be aligned to organizational values and community culture. According to him, a successful leader is the one who can balance institutional goals with preservation of the human spirit within the workplace.

Each one of such theories tends to deliver a particular aspect of coverage concerning the phenomenon of leadership. True project success does not come from holding on to only one model; it could also be achieving it with some mixing up of several theories best suited to team needs and in the specific field context.

## 7. Previous Studies

In this regard, Yıldız (2020) was the author of a study titled "Dönüşümcü Liderlik ve Proje Başarısı Arasındaki İlişki: Yerel STK Örneği" (The Relationship Between Transformational Leadership and Project Success: A Case of Local NGOs), published in the Journal of Leadership and Organization. The study aimed to examine how transformational leadership affects project success in nonprofit organizations found in southeastern Türkiye. The data for research were obtained from a questionnaire designed for project leaders and team members in organizations that provide education, relief, and development. Results provided evidence for a statistically significant positive relationship between transformational leadership dimensions (such as inspirational vision and individualized support) with implementation effectiveness, team satisfaction, and achieving project objectives. The study also recommended including transformational leadership training in organizational capacity-building programs.

Meanwhile, Gürbüz and Aykol (2022) presented a quantitative analytical study made public by the Journal of Management and Organizational Research, entitled "The Relationship Between Leadership Competencies and Team Performance." Through a field survey among employees from both local and international NGOs across regions including Urfa, Gaziantep, and Hatay, the study revealed that personal competencies-emotional intelligence, communication skills, and conflict management-posed the most constructive effect on the improvement of performance in teams and job commitment. A significant number of results were counted, underlining the importance of leaders who not only develop outstandingly-also flexible in their guiding methods, communication, and listening-who contribute much to building cohesive and adaptive teams in sensitive environments.

Through a large-scale quantitative study, **Aga, Noorderhaven, and Vallejo (2016)** examined the relationship between transformational leadership and project success in international development organizations operating in East Africa. The study assessed how leadership influenced variables such as team building, employee satisfaction, and the quality of project delivery. Findings revealed that transformational leadership significantly enhances team effectiveness and task completion by fostering a shared vision, motivation, and inspiration. The authors emphasized the importance of building trust and empowering team members as critical factors for successful project outcomes (Aga et al., 2016).

In a different context, Geoghegan and Dulewicz (2008) conducted their empirical study in the UK titled "Do Project Managers' Leadership Competencies Contribute to Project Success?" The project managers worked across service and industrial sectors. The researchers found a direct correlation between the possession of a mix of leadership competencies- rational, emotional, and managerial- and the quality of project executions. The other findings evidenced that leadership competence goes beyond technical know-how to include motivating teams, making swift decisions, and adjusting management styles to suit the stage of the project.

Müller and Turner (2010) examined the personal traits and managerial competencies of project leaders in 23 countries from a cross-national perspective. The intent of the research was to create effective leadership models for multicultural settings. The results uncovered that competence in communication, motivation, and autonomy was among the most effective in realizing success, especially for projects undertaken with international collaboration. In addition, culturally literate leadership has been shown to improve significantly the inward communication and reduce the chances of conflict among the teams.

## 8. Research Methodology

The mixed method approach in this study has truly imparted a thorough and objective understanding of the relationships among project leadership competencies, team performance, and project success among civil society organizations in the Şanlıurfa Province.

### 8.1 Quantitative Component:

Under this quantitative section of the study, the research questionnaire, which is self-administered, was developed based on three major areas, namely leadership competencies, team performance indicators, and project success criteria. It comprised a total of 30 items, of which 24 were revealing intentions of the core variables of research, while 6 were set to capture the given demographic details of the respondents (such as gender, years of experience, type of organization, etc.). All items were scored using a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) for finer measurement of respondents' perception.

The survey market targeted a purposive sample of 300 male and female staff of both national and international NGOs operating in Şanlıurfa. The sample used was a simple random sample to ensure adequate representation across types of organizations and levels of staff, from executive managers, project team members, and field staff, as well as gender, organizational affiliation, and sectoral targeting (i.e., education, relief, development).

In data analysis for quantitative purposes, SPSS will be used. The following statistical procedures would be applied:

- Descriptive Statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies) in order to summarize the main key points of data.
- Reliability Analysis through Cronbach's Alpha to measure the internal consistency of the measurement scales.
- Pearson Correlation Coefficient to define the degree and direction of relationship between leadership competencies, team performance, and project success.
- Linear Regression Analysis to measure the predictive power of leadership competencies on team performance and project success outcomes.

## 8.2 Qualitative Component

The qualitative aspect of this study relied on conducting **two focus group discussions** involving staff members from mid- and senior-management levels in civil society organizations operating in Şanlıurfa. Each session included between 5 and 7 participants. These discussions aimed to explore field-based perspectives on effective leadership competencies in the humanitarian context, with a particular emphasis on the organizational challenges faced by project leaders in day-to-day operations.

The focus groups provided an interactive environment for dialogue and experience sharing, revealing deeper dimensions that were not captured through the quantitative questionnaire. These included issues such as role conflicts, limited inter-team coordination, and the presence of informal leadership patterns within multicultural teams. Participants repeatedly emphasized the importance of skills such as emotional intelligence, conflict management, and the ability to motivate others as core components of leadership competency in the local context, which is marked by field complexity and cultural diversity.

These qualitative sessions complemented the quantitative analysis by offering interpretive insight into observed relationships and enhanced the validity of the results. They provided a broader understanding of effective leadership in humanitarian settings, contributing significantly to the study's overall findings.

## 9. Statistical Results and Quantitative Findings

### 9.1 Internal Consistency Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)

| Dimension | Cronbach's Alpha (α) | Scientific Evaluation |
|---|---|---|
| Project Leader Competencies | 0.81 | Very Good |
| Team Performance | 0.88 | Excellent |
| Project Success | 0.83 | Very Good |

**Table 1:** Internal Consistency Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)

According to the results, the internal consistency of each of the questionnaire dimensions was found to be acceptable, with Cronbach's Alpha coefficients ranging from 0.81 to 0.88. This score implies a high level of internal consistency among items within each scale, which far exceeds the minimum acceptable standard of 0.70, as proposed by Nunnally (1978). Notably, for the Project Leader Competencies dimension, the alpha coefficient was 0.81, denoting high reliability.

The Team Performance dimension obtained the best score for internal consistency at a truly excellent level of reliability of 0.88 (Gliem & Gliem, 2003). On the other hand, the Project Success dimension obtained a score of 0.83, alsos considered to be in the very good reliability range .

Such findings certainly establish a strong case for the quality of the research tool, thereby increasing the level of reliability of the data obtained, supporting its usage for any subsequent statistical analyses (hypothesis testing or variable relationship assessment) (Hair et al., 2014).

### 9.2 Descriptive Analysis Tables for the Study Dimensions

| Item | Mean | Std. Dev. | Min |
|---|---|---|---|
| Q1 | 3.88 | 1.18 | 1.00 |
| Q2 | 3.81 | 1.24 | 1.00 |
| Q3 | 3.91 | 1.25 | 1.00 |
| Q4 | 3.96 | 1.21 | 1.00 |
| Q5 | 3.92 | 1.20 | 1.00 |

| Item | Mean | Std. Dev. | Min |
|------|------|-----------|-----|
| Q6 | 3.96 | 1.16 | 1.00 |
| Q7 | 3.92 | 1.24 | 1.00 |
| Q8 | 3.94 | 1.24 | 1.00 |

**Table 2:** Descriptive Statistics for the Project Leader Competency Dimension

The Project Leader Competency Dimension was analyzed descriptively. According to the table, the mean responses of participants on the eight items concerning the project leaders' competencies were from 3.81 to 3.96 on a 5-point scale. Relative to the sample's assessments of these competencies in their project supervisors, this was quite a generous evaluation. The maximum mean scores were given for Q4 and Q6 (3.96), which assess the leader's ability to motivate his team and exhibit flexibility in resolving impediments. The minimum mean, on the other hand, was attributed to Q2 (3.81), which deals with the effectiveness of communication skills.

Standard deviation for all items was found to be in a range of 1.16 to 1.25, depicting an intermediate degree of variability in the responses of the participants regarding all characteristics of leadership competencies, which leads to an understanding that leadership competencies are seen rather consistently among participants, with no extreme shift observable .

The median (Median 4.00) and percentiles (25% 3 or 4, 75% 5) point to a concentration of most of the responses toward the higher end of the Likert scale, which indicates a general perception that project leaders have been highly successful—particularly in the areas of motivation, fairness, and participatory decision-making.

Such a finding indicates the presence of effective leadership practices in civil society organizations, consistent with contemporary literature that regards transformational and participative leadership style as fundamental for improving team performance and increasing job commitment (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Geoghegan & Dulewicz, 2008; Aga et al., 2016).

## 9.3 Descriptive Statistics for the Team Performance Dimension

| Item | Mean | Std. Dev. | Min |
|------|------|-----------|-----|
| Q9 | 3.82 | 1.30 | 1.00 |
| Q10 | 3.95 | 1.15 | 1.00 |
| Q11 | 3.93 | 1.24 | 1.00 |
| Q12 | 3.84 | 1.23 | 1.00 |
| Q13 | 3.92 | 1.22 | 1.00 |
| Q14 | 3.89 | 1.22 | 1.00 |
| Q15 | 3.85 | 1.25 | 1.00 |
| Q16 | 4.05 | 1.16 | 1.00 |

**Table 3**: Descriptive Statistics for the Team Performance Dimension

Table 3) shows the mean responses of participants regarding the performance of their work teams. The means range from 3.82 (Q9) to 4.05 (Q16), which suggests a fairly high perception of team performance, as most values tally with the "Agree" level of the five-point Likert scale. Q16 associated with team sense of belonging and motivation toward the project, has the highest mean score (4.05), indicating a solid commitment and intrinsic motivation of team members, essential characteristics in humanitarian work environments (Tannenbaum & Salas, 2020).

Q10 and Q11, addressing team collaboration and trust, as well as a commitment to quality, also scored high means (3.95 and 3.93, respectively), thereby indicating that a healthy culture of collective collaboration and clearly defined performance standards exists. The standard deviations were between 1.15 and 1.30, indicating a slight to moderate variability in the responses of the participants to statements. This variability is considered normal in field studies where the samples are diverse in terms of professional backgrounds and levels of experience .Median values (Median = 4.00) and percentiles indicate that, in most cases, responses lean toward higher Likert scale values, hence further validating the hypothesis that work teams operate in an organizational environment that is stable and supportive of performance and quality realization .

This supports some of the most recent studies, undertaken by Müller & Turner (2010) and Gürbüz & Aykol (2022), confirming that team effectiveness is directly related to a leader's effectiveness in creating a supportive work climate and fostering mutual understanding and trust among team members.

## 9.4 Descriptive Statistics for the Project Success Dimension

| Item | Mean | Std. Dev. | Min |
|------|------|-----------|-----|
| Q17 | 3.92 | 1.16 | 1.00 |
| Q18 | 3.93 | 1.23 | 1.00 |
| Q19 | 3.93 | 1.19 | 1.00 |
| Q20 | 3.89 | 1.21 | 1.00 |
| Q21 | 3.85 | 1.25 | 1.00 |
| Q22 | 3.89 | 1.28 | 1.00 |
| Q23 | 3.82 | 1.19 | 1.00 |
| Q24 | 3.98 | 1.16 | 1.00 |

**Table 4:** Descriptive Statistics for the Project Success Dimension

On average, participant evaluations of project success in their respective organizations varied between 3.82 and 3.98, indicative of a rather high evaluation of the overall performance of projects, judging by employees' appraisal in the humanitarian sector .

Lessons learned for use in future projects, Item Q24 with a maximum mean score of 3.98, emphasizes the existence of effective institutional learning mechanisms and applying experiential knowledge to improve performance-organizational maturity in PMI.(2017)

On-time delivery, budgetary control, and achievement of objectives all had relatively consistent average scores, ranging from 3.92 to 3.93, indicating the disciplined administrative control mechanism and effective monitoring and control processes set throughout the project cycle .

The opposite is the Item Q23 on sustainability after project completion, which had the lowest score at 3.82, indicating that the delivery of outcomes is subject to a number of difficulties. This observation is quite common in humanitarian challenges from the viewpoint of Aga et al. (2016) in their study of development projects in complex contexts.

The standard deviation figures were at values ranging from 1.16 to 1.28, showing there is moderate variability in responses by participants. These values are acceptable by the social research bounds and, thus, reinforce the means as valid indices.

The analytical data further shows that there is a strong relationship between project leader competencies, team performance quality, and project success. According to the data from the questionnaires, leaders with good communication skills can motivate their teams consistently and

demonstrate a commitment to institutional values; they reinforce the collaborative environment and increase coordination and trust among team members. These results support the arguments of Müller & Turner (2010) and Geoghegan & Dulewicz (2008), who observed that effective leadership is key to engendering team performance for realized outcomes. In this manner, team performance seems to be an important link between the leader and the project outcomes. Projects in which team members collaborate and exercise task discipline are more likely to balance time and budget-related constraints, with varied indications of their success—level of beneficiary satisfaction, achievement of strategic goals, and the like. This brings the interesting factor of participative leadership into the picture, leadership that advocates role distribution and decision-making by consensus and further corroborated by the findings in the team performance dimension and literature like Hoch & Dulebohn (2017). Thus, without leadership and what kind of behavioral environment that exists in that organization, it cannot comprehend project success in itself. Leader competencies and team dynamics need to go hand in hand to create a sustainable impact. Therefore, this study recommends investment in the development of leadership and enhancement of both personal and managerial skills, alongside the acceptance of organizational models that enhance teamwork and shared accountability.

## 10. Qualitative Analysis Results

Findings of the focus group discussions with project managers working in civil society organizations in Urfa have generated key insights about the many important qualities of leadership in real fieldwork and administrative challenges within the local humanitarian context. In presenting leadership attributes, they consider very vital in ensuring project success and effective team performance-the constant changes in the work environment -, most participants agreed upon the qualification of emotional intelligence to be among the most critical leadership competences since it helps build healthy relationships within the team, reveals individuals and addresses daily pressure wisely.

Most participants evaluated emotional intelligence as one of the foremost critical leadership competencies in managing both team relationships and its individual needs, as well as flexibly handling daily pressures. Many attributed high levels of humility to successful leaders while avoiding centralized decision-making processes, creating an overwhelming sense of belonging among team members.

Effective communication skills were also noted where not only instructions were relayed, but a secure and interactive environment created which motivates sharing and discussion of issues. By some participants, a successful leader was one who builds trust within the team and engages them directly and honestly, even under difficult circumstances like resource cuts or donor pressure.

In terms of challenges, it was a unanimous opinion that cultural diversity amongst teams is joined by differing professional and language backgrounds as the major challenges in humanitarian work environments. The cultural competence of the leader also was made out to be an important determinant of team cohesion. By some respondents, an important point to establishing active listening has facilitated a reduction in internal conflict and misunderstanding among members.

Moreover, respondents suggested that an engaging leader will not only manage the team but also work to promote empowerment and delegation of responsibilities by prioritizing individuals' skill sets. This, not only enhances performance efficiency but also greatly minimizes centralized leadership. Importance of moral encouragement and continuous support, especially in long-term projects, designed for sustained commitment and self-discipline is also frequently discussed by respondents.

The influence of institutional environment on leadership performance was also highlighted in the discussions. Some participants indicated that supportive organizational policies needed to enhance leadership effectiveness could fall short, regardless of the leader's competencies. Whereas continuous training in a supportive environment would show that leaders are more inventive and adaptable in facing the odds in the prevailing organizations.

Clearly, these qualitative findings say that leadership competences in the humanitarian setting are beyond the traditional management skills. They bring a human-centered approach, have in them the ability to support and engage the team, and the capacity to foster healthy organizational relationships. So, these findings will also complement the argument about the third research question of the study, which aims to identify the most effective leadership competences within organizations in Urfa while shedding light on complementary factors that clarify the link between leadership competence, team performance, and project success.

## 11. Final Analysis in Light of the Results and Study Context

The findings of this study, combining quantitative tools with qualitative analysis are telling on the role of project leadership competencies in developing teams to perform better and ensure project success-inclusion function through civil society organizations working in humanitarian conditions in Şanlıurfa. Quantitative data revealed a moderate to strong positive association of leadership competency with team effectiveness and project success. This indeed implies an important personal and leadership dimension in dealing with complex working conditions that demand flexibility and high interaction with change.

The qualitative data gathered from in-depth interview sessions proved that leaders who possess human-centered skills-most of the time associated with active listening, humility, motivation, and delegation- attain overall better project performance. These findings lend their support to

literature which includes Bass & Riggio (2006), Müller & Turner (2010), and Korkmaz & Yıldırım (2023). These sources are related by stressing the importance of emotional intelligence and participative leadership in achieving team cohesion and project goal accomplishment.

This study also confirmed that project success in humanitarian environments is never really dependent on proper scheduling or good funding alone but rather on having a leader who understands cultural dynamics, who builds a trust base within the group, and strengthens the shared purposeful goal. Due to the pressure of operations that civil society organizations undergo, developing leadership competency was a very necessary investment to ensure that outcomes are sustainable and of good quality.

Thus, the study closes an important gap in project management literature dealing with humanitarian contexts; by focusing more on human and leadership dimensions than purely technical aspects, it enjoins decision-makers in organizations across Urfa to adopt more holistic leadership selection and training practices considering the surrounding social and cultural environment and the need to develop leaders' skills in human interaction and participative management-not just the traditional technical competencies.

## 12. Practical Recommendations

As a result of the study findings which show a statistically significant positive correlation between leadership competencies, team performance, and project success, a set of practical recommendations emerge that could improve the effectiveness of humanitarian projects and contribute to sustainable institutional impact among development organizations in civil society, particularly in complex contexts like those found in the city of Urfa.

First, it is recommended to develop specialized training programs that focus on the leadership competencies of project managers, especially in the areas of communication, conflict management, motivation, and skills to operate in multicultural environments. These have proved to be some of the most influential components in improving team interaction quality as well as increasing commitment and performance levels, according to Müller & Turner, 2010; Hoch & Dulebohn, 2017.

Secondly, the findings of the study also recommend the establishment of periodic leadership performance evaluation systems in organizations. These evaluations would be conducted using both quantitative methods such as structured surveys, and participatory group assessment sessions, allowing staff to give their views regarding the leadership styles and their effects on performance. This holistic approach ensures transparency and builds extra bricks to hold leadership accountability, as pointed out by Tannenbaum & Salas (2020).

The study also recommends that organizational systems adopt practices of shared leadership within team structures through delegated authority and involvement of team members in the decision-making processes. The qualitative results revealed that this leadership style works toward reducing tensions among team members and increasing collaboration and creativity-all supported by Hoch & Dulebohn (2017) and Korkmaz & Yıldırım (2023).

Finally, it is suggested to the donors and policy-makers in the humanitarian sector to pay keen attention to the training and development of emerging leaders, as well as strengthening internal governance systems that match up to a sustainable institution. Strengthening competencies in leadership is not merely an instrument of improving performance results; it is also a strategic investment in human capital, as stated by Aga et al. (2016) in their research on leadership and success in development projects.

## 13. Conclusion

From the quantitative and qualitative findings put forth, the present study asserts that leadership competencies with respect to humanitarian project management cannot be merely characterized as operational skills, but must be viewed as strategic components that impact so greatly on team performance and the success of field endeavors. The statistical information thus highlighted that the relationship between leader competencies and success is not superficial but a weighty and meaningful aspect that counts for variance in project outcomes. This was further supported by qualitative analyses as respondents expressed similar views on the importance of motivating and participative leadership in dealing with daily issues and in creating competent teams amidst the limitations and pressures confronting humanitarian organizations.

Key leadership concepts were proposed throughout the study, namely clarity of vision, intrinsic motivation, diversity management, and pressure handling were found to be essential for effective leadership. The findings intersect with earlier literature, such as the one by Aga et al., 2016 which broadly discusses the mediating role of team building on project success, and work by Hoch & Dulebohn, 2017 stressing shared leadership effectiveness under dynamic work contexts. The agreement between findings of the previous literature and present study adds to the reliability of the current study and theorizes the basis for the further development of leadership policy in NGOs.

Moreover, the study raises insights on the need of local adaptability, showing that leaders that understood the cultural and social context of Şanlıurfa, with its ethnic diversity and logistic challenges, were better suited to ensuring team stability and tangible results. This stresses the need to rethink the hiring and training of leaders in humanitarian organizations to make sure that selection criteria incorporate, in addition to academic qualifications or technical experiences, human and behavioral competencies found to be critically effective by this study.

The design, with both quantitative and qualitative approaches, to the research has added strength to the analysis and interpretation enabling, therefore, more balanced and comprehensive results. Such a methodological combination is itself a notable contribution to the relevant literature, where such integration is still rarely applied in leadership studies focusing on the local humanitarian context.

Based on the above, this study has several practical messages to offer to decision-makers in NGOs, most notably that project success does not rely so much on clearly set goals or available resources; rather it is a product of wise leadership—skillful, visionary, adaptable leaders who are willing to flip challenges into opportunities. With the expanding civil society organizations stretching across the Arab world and Türkiye, there is more need for corresponding leadership models to the complexity and ever-changing nature of the environment.

In conclusion, this research thus offers avenues for future investigations undertaken in the spirit of comparing leadership competencies between local and international agencies or studying leadership training's long-term impacts—thereby elucidating further the actual impact of leadership on humanitarian project management and contributing to both academic debate and field practice.

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