

Leadership Styles and Their Impact on Church Growth in Alexandria and Springfield, Virginia

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Churches have seen a decline in the number of people who attend worship services. This decline could be due to leadership styles exhibited by pastors. This qualitative case study evaluated the perceptions of church leaders to include pastors, deacons, ministers, and members of congregations regarding leadership styles. Church leaders' understanding of transformational, transactional, laissez-faire, servant leadership styles, and their potential to promote the growth of church membership were examined to determine if these influenced the growth of the church. Interviews with 40 church leaders and members of four congregations, a focus group, a review of church documents, and analysis yielded 12 emerging themes.

Keywords: church decline, church membership, leadership styles, transformational, transactional, laissez-faire, servant leadership

INTRODUCTION

Individuals possess different leadership qualities which could help shape the direction of the organization they are working for. Leaders who are said to be charismatic could influence the minds and behaviors of others. It is important to have positive leadership qualities to ensure others could support the vision and mission of that leader. When there is a vision in place, leaders in a church, for instance, could help promote the growth of membership and convince members to recruit other churchgoers to attend services more often. Leadership consists of characteristics such as intellect, fluency, confidence, emotional intelligence, stature, vigor, and cordiality (Northouse, 2013).

When leaders are attentive to others, they are likely to get the support from members. Leaders influence their subordinates or followers by paying attention and appreciating their opinions, actions, thoughts, and supporting them to work effectively on their given objectives (Northouse, 2013). These characteristics are some of the most vital factors that can assist leaders in encouraging and influencing individuals to achieve a common purpose in the organization (Northouse, 2013). Franck and Iannaccone (2014) emphasized the fact that church leaders who want to make an impact on their congregation must be active in their preaching, teaching, guiding the church congregation, and managing and directing events of the church.

The qualitative case study explored the perceptions of church leaders and members of congregations regarding leadership styles and how the implementation of these styles influences the growth of church membership in Pentecostal churches in Alexandria and Springfield, Virginia. Leaders of Pentecostal churches could reflect on their leadership practices to promote growth in their organizations efficiently and help create a positive impact to members and their communities.

BACKGROUND

Church leaders are responsible for the membership growth of their non-profit organizations. Băeșu and Bejinaru (2013) emphasized the role of church leaders as proponents of change who need to customize management styles to conform to the attributes and conduct of their followers. Their management style do change depending on the situation and environments. Rainer (2013) indicated that although the church leaders play a major role in church decisions, communication with stakeholders, and daily church procedures, the positive impact of these leaders as they pertain to membership growth has not been fully evident because of decline in memberships, which have resulted in church closures (Rainer, 2013).

Data on church attendance indicated an unequal distribution of opinion among adults on the significance of going to church; 49% assumed it is somewhat or very significant, and 51% assumed it is not at all significant (Barna Group, 2014). These data reflected a stark disagreement between the people who are faithfully active and people who are resistant to attending church; this discrepancy has affected American culture, morality, politics, and religion (Barna Group, 2014).

Church leaders must design organizational and leadership structures of church groups to facilitate growth, change, and production for the church (Banks, 2013). To remedy this decline, church leaders may need to change their leadership style and methods to reach the people of the church and community. Implementation of a leadership style or form depends upon the situation or needs of the church (Banks, 2013). Leadership types or styles for a church may change based on its needs, and leaders must address the needs of the future church by considering trends and change so that the church may continually grow and expand (Banks, 2013).

PROBLEM

The problem of the growth of church membership and its connection to church leadership styles was the focus of this qualitative case study. Even with tens of millions of Americans attending churches every weekend, church worship practices have declined in recent years (Barna Group, 2014). According to Allen et al. (2013), the problem may be an indication that church leaders are not ready to accept or adjust to change.

Based on the limited data on church membership, it was important to explore the different leadership styles of pastors, deacons, ministers, and members of the congregation of Pentecostal churches in Alexandria and Springfield, Virginia. This study identified these leadership styles such as transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire styles, and how they contributed to church membership growth.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework of this study was the full-range leadership theory by Bass (1996) and Greenleaf's (1970) servant leadership theory. The full-range leadership theory (Bass, 1996) places leaders at the heart of the group process and argues that their efforts influence followers (Oberfield, 2014). Scholars and practitioners and organizations across a range of disciplines have embraced the full-range leadership theory and have achieved a level of public acclaim that is rare for academic concepts (Oberfield, 2014).

The full-range leadership theory (Bass, 1996) derived from the concepts of the transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles. Transformational leaders influence their members to transcend their self-interests for the benefit of the organization (McCleskey, 2014). Transactional leaders focus on the roles of supervision, organization, and group performance (Cherry, 2016). Laissez-faire leaders avoid responsibility, delay decision making, and provide no feedback to church members (Allen et al., 2013).

Greenleaf (1970) defined servant leadership not only as a management technique but also as a way of life that begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve and to serve first. The central idea in Greenleaf's (1970) theory was that leaders should serve with flair, kindness, and bravery, and followers would answer to capable servants as leaders. Thus, the idea of the servant as a follower was as important as the servant as leader. Individuals may encounter these two roles at a certain time, stressing the desire for discernment and determination, two significant features of the servant as leader or follower (Greenleaf, 1977). Bass's and Greenleaf's theories can be applied to the roles of leaders in a church. These theories offered insight into the assessment and analysis of leadership styles and their influences on growth in an organizational setting. These leadership styles lead to decision-making procedures for resolving individual and group problems.

These theories also provided a foundation for this study; the participants answered the research questions and other subquestions to address the issue of leadership styles of the leaders of Pentecostal churches in Alexandria and Springfield, Virginia. Participants received definitions of these leadership styles to achieve a coherent understanding of the study.

DISCUSSION

The crucial point of discussion addressed in this study reveal the consequence of leadership styles, operations, and reliable components among leaders in church organizations. The findings can guide church leaders to secure a sound understanding of how church leadership styles relate to the prosperity of the church as a nonprofit organization. The data can provide notable information on prevailing leadership styles and how they aid in the future of the church within a nonprofit organizational setting.

The results of this study has value in Pentecostal churches in Alexandria and Springfield, Virginia, to strengthen the leadership styles of leaders and members and to expand their understanding of their role as leaders in the church. Churches need to further their efforts in serving the cornerstone organization so they could continually meet the needs of diverse communities (Watkins, 2014). With this study, Pentecostal church leaders could gain a new outlook on their leadership practices, obtain tools that will help them build their organizations effectively, and support their members' efforts to create a positive influence that could change their communities and cities.

Methodology and Research Design

The study used a qualitative methodology to determine the perceptions of church leaders such as pastors, deacons, ministers, and members of congregations regarding their leadership styles and how the implementation of these styles influences the growth of church membership in Pentecostal churches in Alexandria and Springfield, Virginia. The qualitative method supported the examination of how individuals and groups establish significance. The qualitative investigation involved data collection through interviews, observations, documents, and qualitative analysis to find substantively relevant patterns and themes (Patton, 2015). The study included a sequence of plans, considerations, and an evaluation of the literature on the condition of the Pentecostal church and the causes of the church's membership decline.

A case study generates a free-standing detailed, and rich story about a person, organization, event, campaign, or program, which is the focus of the study (Patton, 2015). This method certifies that the subject is not observed through a single lens; instead, a variety of different objects and perspectives permit disclosure and understanding of various aspects surrounding the problem (Patton, 2015; Yin,

2014). The case study research design used for this study generates a free-standing detailed and rich story about a person, organization, event, campaign, or program, which is the focus of the study (Patton, 2015).

The rationale for this research tradition is that researchers using the case study methodology can assist in creating an awareness of difficult situations and in evaluating the connection between situations (Yin, 2014). Case study research permits researchers to collect information from different sources to increase the validity of a multi-case study (Lewis, 2015). In qualitative study, participants may speak openly and give specific information within a compact grouping, providing in-depth information; in contrast, quantitative techniques do not accommodate immediate follow-up inquiries (Pearce, Thøgersen-Ntoumani, & Duda, 2014).

Population

The population for this qualitative case study was pastors, deacons, and ministers of Pentecostal churches in Alexandria and Springfield, Virginia. I selected the participants using the nonprobability sampling technique of purposive or judgmental sampling (Patton, 2015). This technique does not afford all individuals in the population an equal chance of being selected (Patton, 2015); instead, the focus is to select participants who are likely to have pertinent knowledge and experience to contribute to the study. The sampling permitted the selection of leaders who could describe their leadership styles and the impact of those styles on church growth.

The target sample size for the research was 40 to 80 participants, consisting approximately 10 to 20 pastors, 10 to 20 deacons, 10 to 20 ministers, and eight to 15 members of the congregation for individual face-to-face interviews and four to six participants for one focus group interview with leaders and members of congregation of Pentecostal churches in Alexandria and Springfield, Virginia. Only pastors, deacons, ministers, and members of the congregations of four Pentecostal churches in Alexandria, and Springfield, Virginia, were eligible for the study.

This sample included three demographic groups of church members. First, the participants were active members of the Pentecostal churches in Alexandria and Springfield, Virginia. Second, the participants held leadership roles within the Pentecostal churches in Alexandria and Springfield, Virginia. English-speaking Pentecostal churches participated in this research study.

INSTRUMENTATION

The main technique of data collection for this case study was semi-structured interviews. The interviews were audio-recorded to ensure the reliability and validity of the data and findings (S. J. Taylor, Bogdan, & De Vault, 2015). The interview protocol allowed for flexibility and allowed participants to provide detailed responses (Hancock & Algozzine, 2015). During the transcript review, each participant verified the exact significance of the interviews (Roig-Tierno, Huarng, & Ribeiro-Soriano, 2015).

One-on-one interviews served to gather information on each church leader's perceptions of their leadership styles and how the implementation of the styles influenced the growth of church membership. During a focus group interview meeting, participants described how they placed significance and identified nonprofit organizations' leadership effectiveness, providing detailed insight to enhance the depiction of the phenomenon of interest (Tecu & Tescasiu, 2015). The inclusion of a focus group interview meeting in addition to the individual interviews offered two advantages: first, the ability to achieve detailed examination of a specific topic that would not be feasible in quantitative study, and second, the benefit of creating provisions for new topics and concepts that one might present through the dealings with the participants (Miles & Sparks, 2014). Data also illuminated and explained the leadership styles of leaders in Alexandria and Springfield, Virginia, and those styles' impact on church growth.

The participants in this nonprobability purposive sampling answered open-ended interview questions about the leadership styles of leaders and their impact on church growth within Pentecostal churches in Alexandria and Springfield, Virginia. At the start of the interview, the participants had an opportunity to accept or refuse the audio recording process. The face-to-face interviews lasted 30 to 45 minutes but no more than an hour, and all participants consented to audio recording and verbatim transcription for data

analysis. Each participant had enough time to answer the interview questions honestly, as established in the case study protocol (Yin, 2014). Face-to-face individual interviews lasted between 45 minutes and an hour. The focus group interview meeting lasted 35 minutes.

PROCEDURES FOR DATA COLLECTION

The purpose of data collection is to gather information concerning a specific attribute of a person or phenomenon. The use of record gathering as a research instrument produced thoughtful assessment by disclosing energetic and victorious leaders of Pentecostal churches in Alexandria and Springfield, Virginia.

At the end of the data collection process, each participant received a copy of the final transcript and a thank you letter for their participation in this research study. Every participant had the chance to examine the transcript to confirm the accurate representation of their responses (Harvey, 2015). Finally, I held debriefing sessions via telephone with participants and asked about their experiences with the research to check for any unexpected adverse consequences or misunderstandings.

DATA ANALYSIS PLAN

A specific assessment of all interviews was conducted by maintaining a careful data analysis to ensure that the information was reliable (Devotta et al., 2016). A broad assessment of records from the four Pentecostal churches provided relevant information related to the different leadership styles of church leaders, pastors, deacons, and ministers, and those styles' influences on the growth of church membership in Pentecostal Churches in Alexandria and Springfield, Virginia. The review of documents such as files, policies and procedures manual, and quarterly reports from the four Pentecostal churches provided a useful comparison to the information gathered from the interviews, a way of verifying accuracy for the analysis, and an additional source of data.

NVivo software was used to assist with the coding and highlighting of ideas and accounts to aid in understanding the core of the occasion (Brandão, 2015). NVivo software permits the controlled arranging of imported records to source files of interiors, exteriors, and notes. Database for various events were created during the research process. After the evaluation of the data in the NVivo software, I carried out an extra broad analysis of the data to discover ideas and connections (Woods, Paulus, Atkins, & Macklin, 2015). During the process of coding and labeling a qualitative study, themes emerge since a researcher needs to describe the sentences, expressions, and passages obtained through the course of the interview and organize them so that commonalities and themes along with the data can be recognized (Dasgupta, 2015).

Data Collection

Data for this study derived from one-on-one semi-structured interviews, one focus group, and a review of documents from the churches. Pastors, deacons, ministers, and members of the congregations contributed to this exploratory case study. A total of 40 people took part in the individual face-to-face interviews, including 10 pastors, 10 deacons, 10 ministers, and 10 members of the congregation. Five of those participants who were leaders and members of the congregation from the four Pentecostal churches also agreed to participate in the focus group. The individual interviews and the focus group interview took place at the participants' church offices.

DEMOGRAPHIC

The participants in this research were all church leaders and members of the various Pentecostal churches in Alexandria and Springfield, Virginia. Those who met the inclusion criteria and expressed willingness to participate signed the statement of informed consent and arranged a time and place for their interview. Face-to-face data collection procedures included semistructured face-to-face individual interviews with 40 participants and one focus group interview meeting with five participants.

Alphanumeric participant codes (P1, P2, P3, . . . P40) issued to all the individuals in place of their real names ensured confidentiality and protected the privacy of participants. Table 1 presents demographic information about the participants, including gender, years of experience in their position in the church, what position they held, and which church (coded C1, C2, C3, C4) they attended. The participants' years of experience ranged from 4 to 10 years.

**TABLE 1
PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS**

Participant No.	Gender*	Years of Experience	Position	Church
1	F	5	Member of Congregation	C1
2	M	10	Pastor	C2
3	F	4	Minister	C3
4	F	5	Minister	C1
5	M	5	Minister	C4
6	F	10	Minister	C2
7	M	5	Deacon	C1
8	M	8	Pastor	C2
9	F	6	Member of Congregation	C3
10	M	6	Deacon	C4
11	F	8	Member of Congregation	C3
12	F	5	Member of Congregation	C4
13	M	6	Deacon	C1
14	F	6	Minister	C2
15	M	9	Pastor	C3
16	M	4	Minister	C4
17	M	5	Minister	C1
18	M	8	Pastor	C1
19	F	5	Member of Congregation	C2
20	M	8	Pastor	C1
21	M	4	Member of Congregation	C3
22	M	10	Pastor	C4
23	F	5	Deacon	C2
24	M	6	Minister	C3
25	F	5	Member of Congregation	C4
26	M	10	Pastor	C3
27	M	5	Member of Congregation	C2
28	M	9	Pastor	C4
29	M	8	Pastor	C2
30	M	9	Member of Congregation	C3
31	F	7	Member of Congregation	C4
32	M	6	Deacon	C1
33	F	7	Deacon	C3
34	M	8	Deacon	C1
35	F	6	Deacon	C1
36	F	6	Pastor	C2
37	F	6	Deacon	C2
38	F	7	Deacon	C4
39	F	8	Minister	C2
40	F	9	Minister	C4

Note. Gender: M = male, F = female.

TABLE 2
DETAILED DESCRIPTIONS OF PARTICIPANT TRANSCRIPTIONS

List of Participants	Type of Leader	Length of Interview in Minutes	No. of Pages*	Location of Interview	Type of Interview
1	Pastor	40	15	Church	Face-to-face
2	Pastor	35	12	Church	Face-to-face
3	Pastor	40	14	Church	Face-to-face
4	Pastor	45	15	Church	Face-to-face
5	Pastor	40	13	Church	Face-to-face
6	Pastor	35	12	Church	Face-to-face
7	Pastor	35	12	Church	Face-to-face
8	Pastor	40	13	Church	Face-to-face
9	Pastor	35	12	Church	Face-to-face
10	Pastor	30	11	Church	Face-to-face
11	Deacon	40	13	Church	Face-to-face
12	Deacon	45	13	Church	Face-to-face
13	Deacon	40	12	Church	Face-to-face
14	Deacon	35	11	Church	Face-to-face
15	Deacon	30	10	Church	Face-to-face
16	Deacon	35	11	Church	Face-to-face
17	Deacon	35	10	Church	Face-to-face
18	Deacon	30	10	Church	Face-to-face
19	Deacon	30	11	Church	Face-to-face
20	Deacon	35	12	Church	Face-to-face
21	Minister	35	11	Church	Face-to-face
22	Minister	30	10	Church	Face-to-face
23	Minister	35	11	Church	Face-to-face
24	Minister	35	11	Church	Face-to-face
25	Minister	30	10	Church	Face-to-face
26	Minister	30	9	Church	Face-to-face
27	Minister	35	11	Church	Face-to-face
28	Minister	35	11	Church	Face-to-face
29	Minister	30	10	Church	Face-to-face
30	Minister	30	10	Church	Face-to-face
31	Member of Congregation	35	12	Church	Face-to-face
32	Member of Congregation	35	11	Church	Face-to-face
33	Member of Congregation	35	10	Church	Face-to-face
34	Member of Congregation	35	10	Church	Face-to-face
35	Member of Congregation	35	11	Church	Face-to-face
36	Member of Congregation	30	9	Church	Face-to-face
37	Member of Congregation	35	10	Church	Face-to-face
38	Member of Congregation	30	10	Church	Face-to-face
39	Member of Congregation	30	11	Church	Face-to-face
40	Member of Congregation	30	10	Church	Face-to-face

Note. *All transcript pages were double-spaced 12-point Times New Roman font.

Table 2 displays details about the transcripts, indicating the number of participants, types of participants, length of the interviews, number of pages in the transcripts, and location and type of interview.

DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

The data analysis process for this study consisted of five phases recommended by Yin (2014): information collecting, information dismantling, information gathering, information clarification, and formulating conclusions and results. During information collecting, researchers become familiar with the transcripts and designated codes. The second stage was information dismantling to get the initial codes from the answers. The third step was information gathering for themes. The fourth step of information clarification involved recognizing clusters to establish common themes. The final stage was the selection of the most frequently mentioned themes.

Importing the transcribed interview data into the NVivo 12 Pro software from the Word documents provided an orderly collection of data organized into groups and themes. Thematic data analysis is a technique for condensing the information from numerous bases and then categorizing the information into themes and ideas, connecting information from different bases, and finishing by identifying significant information and information that might remain valuable for forthcoming study (Saldaña, 2016). The thematic coding process consisted of an evaluation of data, including interviews, focus group discussion, and document review. Thematic coding involves examining the transcripts for themes and modes, recording every theme that appears, entering data in the qualitative data analysis software, and examining themes in different ways, such as idea planning for themes and explaining the findings (Boston College, 2016).

TABLE 3
SUMMARY OF DATA FROM SEMISTRUCTURED INTERVIEWS,
FOCUS GROUP, AND DOCUMENT REVIEW

Codes	Themes and Subthemes	No. of Occurrences	Data Source	% of Occurrences
Leaders with good character are examples for members and other leaders to follow.	Ideal church leadership styles Subtheme: Moral standards	25	Semistructured interviews	100%
Strategic planning is lacking in the management of the church.	Church leadership management Subtheme: Planning and organization	16	Semistructured interviews	85%
Prayer, devotion, and sermon for church service.	Church leadership motivation	25	Semistructured interviews	100%
Important for leaders to have friendly and truthful communication with the congregation.	Leadership that ensures church growth	23	Semistructured interviews	92%
The style of leadership employed by a church leader is the main reason behind the growth of churches.	Effective leadership communication	17	Semistructured interviews	68%
Pastors and church leaders should motivate individuals in the church.	Leadership practices	16	Semistructured interviews	64%
Pastors and leaders must be committed to leadership development and to develop others.	Developing leaders	25	Semistructured interviews	100%

Pastors and leaders are not perfect; they have flaws, and still, they have to grow and develop to be good leaders.	Perceptions of leadership	25	Semistructured interviews	100%
The church is about people; the church is not just a building, and pastors' and leaders' techniques will result in an increase or decline of church attendance.	Church attendance growth and decline rates.	5	Focus group	100%
The most important roles of pastors and leaders are to teach the Bible, encourage members to pay offerings.	Leaders' roles	5	Focus group	100%
The leaders and members receive training to improve their leadership skills and growth to be effective church leaders.	Church administrator's handbook.	5	Document review	100%
The information shows details of policies and strategies of the church's vision and implementation and the church's mission as a nonprofit establishment.	Vision and mission statement	5	Document review	100%

Ultimately, analysis revealed 12 emerging themes and two subthemes; the 12 themes were ideal leadership styles, church leadership management, church leadership motivation, leadership styles that ensure church growth, effective leadership communication, leadership practices, developing leaders, perception of leadership, church attendance growth and decline rate, leader's leadership role, church administrator's handbook, vision and mission statement. The two subthemes were moral standards and planning and organization. Table 3 displays a summary of the 12 emergent themes and two subthemes that derived from individual interviews, a focus group meeting, and document review from four churches (C1, C2, C3, C4).

STUDY RESULTS

The foundation of this analysis was the two research questions:

RQ1. *What are the leadership styles commonly employed by church leaders to increase membership growth in Pentecostal churches in Alexandria and Springfield, Virginia? and*

RQ2. *What are the church leaders' (pastors, deacons, and ministers) knowledge and understanding of the implementation of the leadership styles (transformational, transactional, laissez-faire, and servant) to increase membership growth in Pentecostal churches in Alexandria, and Springfield, Virginia?*

The following sections present a discussion of the results from each of the data sources, along with the explanations of how they connected to the two main research questions. Examples and quotations from participants' responses enhance and provide depth to the portrayal of how leadership styles impact church growth in the Pentecostal churches in Alexandria and Springfield, Virginia. Table 4 summarizes the alignment of the data sources with the emergent themes and subthemes and the research questions.

TABLE 4
ALIGNMENT OF DATA SOURCES, THEMES, AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Data Sources				
Interviews	Focus Group	Document Review	Themes and Subthemes	Research Question
X			1. Ideal church leadership styles Subtheme: Moral standards	1
X			2. Church leadership management Subtheme: Planning and organization	1
X			3. Leadership motivation	1
X			4. Leadership styles to ensure church growth	1
X			5. Effective communication	2
X			6. Leadership practices	2
X			7. Developing leaders	2
X			8. Perceptions of leadership	2
	X		9. Church attendance growth and decline	1
	X		10. Leaders' leadership roles	2
		X	11. Church administrator's handbook	1
		X	12. Vision and mission statements	2

Results from Interviews

Research Question 1: What are the leadership styles commonly employed by church leaders to increase membership growth in Pentecostal churches in Alexandria and Springfield, Virginia?

Theme 1: Ideal Church Leadership Styles

The first theme appeared from the interview data and contributed to answering RQ1 because the responses identified the leadership styles the participants perceived to be influential in the churches. The participants remained extremely keen on their understanding of an ideal leadership style within the Pentecostal church. For instance, all the participants agreed that if a leader decides to function by immoral standards, their behavior will damage the church and the body of Christ. Individuals do sometimes criticize the activities of leaders who decide to employ untruthfulness, try to put down others, or seek enrichment at the cost of the underprivileged (Johnson, 2017).

All the participants described ideal leadership as a leader who positions him or herself at the forefront of change and develops assistants, teammates, and colleagues to adopt and carry out the collective vision of the church. These followers take on the mutual obligation to maintain and develop solutions that support the collective vision. P22 from C4 added, "Leaders in the Pentecostal churches should encourage and influence their members to perform at their best potential and describe the focus and vision for the church." A good leader, at no point in time should lack truthfulness in the private and proficient areas of leadership (Mabey et al., 2016).

Subtheme: Moral Standards

Moral leadership is a shared practice that includes individual moral conduct and moral inspiration within the church and the surrounding neighborhood (Johnson, 2017). P2, P8, P29, and P26, pastors from C2, expressed that leaders within the church must have dignity and respect, provide a good example for the members, and recognize the scriptures as authority for management.

Theme 2: Church Leadership Management

Theme 2, the need for effective planning by the church leadership management, also helped answer RQ1. Leaders in Pentecostal churches, besides performing praise and worship put forward efforts of shaping and managing the church surroundings of their congregation to ally with the main standards and policies of the Pentecostal church. Some participants agreed that the church surrounding and its management is an effective enhancement of successful church growth.

All the participants mentioned that the church should have a system of management that the church leaders follow to help with the execution of changes, reorganization, and helpful activities for the growth of the church and its neighborhood. P14, a minister from C2, stated, "Every leader must be organized, or they will not succeed." P2, P8, and P28, pastors from C2, C3, and C4, explained that their calling as a pastor is to build a relationship with members, give them Christ love, the agape love, the unconditional love.

Subtheme: Planning and Organization

Leaders have been characterized as the main connection to active signs of change within an establishment and the main relationship to that change (Guamba, 2017). Planning is the orderly creation of ideas and ambitions required to produce accomplishments within an establishment (Guamba, 2017). All the participants expressed that planning strategically helps the leader carry out changes effectively, execute changes, and rearrange and implement creative procedures to help the growth of the church and its community. P40, a minister from C4 said,

Every leader must have a strategic plan; otherwise, they are going to fall short of their members' expectations. ... When a leader possesses a strategic plan, it gives them the confidence to work with other leaders and members to effect a successful change within the church.

Theme 3: Church Leadership Motivation

The third theme also supported RQ1. P9, P11, P21, and P30, all members of the congregation from C3, expressed that the pastor and church leaders are very good at motivating and encouraging individuals in the church to have great plans to achieve their goals. Motivational leadership is the conduct that inspires individuals to work toward a common objective and the act or conduct that lead to transformation within a group (Fehr, Yam, & Dang, 2015). P15 and P18, pastors from church C3 and C1, commented that expansion and connection with the leaders and the individuals who attend church hold potential for enhancing church growth, but these goals receive little attention in the church. P15 further stated that some pastors do not connect in any significant way with their congregations.

Theme 4: Leadership Styles That Ensure Church Growth

The fourth theme that emerged from the interview information further contributed to answering RQ1 because members perceived an effective leadership style as necessary for church growth. All the pastors mentioned that their leadership styles fluctuated, as they sometimes needed to display characteristics of a servant, transformational, or transactional leader, depending on the needs of the members and the church congregation. The servant leadership style parallels Jesus's form of leadership style, wherein several individuals are keen on being part of the body that decides how the church should progress (Greenleaf, 1977). All pastors emphasized that as servant leaders, they serve according to the principles of the Bible.

Theme 5: Effective Leadership Communication

The fifth theme that appeared from the interview information supported RQ2. What are the church leaders' (pastors, deacons, and ministers) knowledge and understanding of the implementation of the leadership styles (transformational, transactional, laissez-faire, and servant) to increase membership growth in Pentecostal churches in Alexandria and Springfield, Virginia?

All the participants commented that it is important for leaders to have friendly and truthful communication with their congregation. P18, a pastor from C1, stressed that all pastors and other leaders must regularly inform their members of improvements, challenges, and recent events. P2, a pastor from C2 shared, "Leaders have to communicate daily to their church congregation, as hearsay is not good for the growth of the church." Hall and Davis (2016) argued that communication must be sufficient to establish and support private, specialized, and leadership connection.

Theme 6: Leadership Practices

The sixth theme that appeared from the interview information also supported RQ2. All the participants agreed that prayer, devotion, and arrangement of the sermons for church services were the practice duties of the pastor. All members of the congregations from all four churches emphasized that the pastors should have no business in the finances of the churches; they should appoint people to handle the financial matters.

Theme 7: Developing Leaders

The seventh theme that emerged from interview responses helped answer RQ2. P19 and P 27, members of the congregation from C2, emphasized the lack of commitment of the pastor and other leaders towards leadership development and the need to develop other individuals. P19 further commented,

The pastor is always occupied with other functions and doesn't have the desire to develop himself or other leaders or members. A lot of pastors and untrained leaders have ignored getting the training required for the church to develop and grow.

Theme 8: Perception of Leadership

Theme 8 helped answer RQ2. P2, a pastor from C2, said,

I am not a perfect leader. I have flaws. I have a lot of growth still in life but those simple things, leading, doing things when others are not around, humble myself, listening, those things help to make me a good leader. Those are specific skills that I love, and I would add one last thing to that list: accepting criticism.

P8, a pastor from C3 commented,

We as leaders, have to admit we are wrong, ask for forgiveness, and don't make the same mistakes over again. So, we as leaders have to be better with those we have alienated and cause a decline, apologize and try not to manipulate them, not sell them something to get back, but win them back by selling them the truth.

RESULTS FROM THE FOCUS GROUP

The focus group included five participants who participated in the discussion that lasted 42 minutes. Two themes emerged from the focus group information: church attendance growth and decline rates, and leaders' leadership roles.

Theme 9: Church Attendance Growth and Decline Rate

This theme emerged from the focus group interview with five participants and pertained to RQ1. All five participants expressed that with church attendance growth and decline rate, it is the responsibility of the leaders to plan, direct, and organize programs regularly to encourage individuals inside and outside the church to attend and become permanent members.

Theme 10: Leaders' Leadership Role

This theme supported RQ2. The focus group participants agreed that the leadership style of the pastor and other leaders does not matter. P8, a pastor from C2 said,

The most significant role of the Pentecostal pastor or leader in the church is to teach the Bible scriptures to the congregation and explain to the members about the importance of paying their tithes and offerings.

One focus group participant stated, "The leaders of the church have to be genuine, be sincere, take the lead, and have to be an example to all because people are observing them all the time." Phillips (2014) hinted that several leaders within the church aspire to preach or teach and not lead, whereas other leaders within the church honestly intend to manage the church establishment.

RESULTS FROM THE DOCUMENT REVIEW

With the permission of the senior pastors and administrators from the four Pentecostal churches, access to documents for review were provided, and notes were taken regarding the vision statements, related features of the handbook, and revised significant parts of the handbook and logbook. The process of document review lasted for a week. Two themes emerged from the data gathered during the document review.

Theme 11: Church Administrator's Handbook

The information from the church administrator's handbook supported RQ1. This document was a summary of policies, legislative actions, and established procedures intended to guide the administration of the Pentecostal church's various ministries, mainly outreach, membership, music, security, and financial. This document from the four Pentecostal churches indicated that the senior pastors support leaders and members of the congregation through various training programs to improve their leadership skills and promote their growth into effective leaders.

All focus group participants mentioned that the church administrative handbook shows the defined responsibilities of board members, the pastor, and other leaders and defines how they should carry out the duties of planning, organizing, and directing leaders and members on the day-to-day running of the church. P29, a pastor from C2, said, "Leaders and members within the Pentecostal church will find that many commonly asked questions are answered in these pages."

Theme 12: Vision and Mission Statements

The document review also included perusal of the various vision and mission statements from the four Pentecostal churches; these documents supported RQ2. The information from the four Pentecostal churches revealed details of policies and strategies of the churches' vision and how it related to the churches' mission as nonprofit establishments. P15, the pastor from C3, stated, "Communicating the vision and mission of the church helps distribute information, bringing people together, spreading the word of God within the church community and far beyond."

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Interpretation of Findings

The research findings confirmed other researchers' results and provided a more in-depth knowledge of the leadership styles within the Pentecostal churches in Alexandria and Springfield, Virginia, and the impact those styles had on church growth. The literature review established that leaders place top priority on the conduct, quality, and style of leadership behaviors they exhibit to function effectively (Bell, 2013; Bunch, 2013; Lee et al., 2015; McCleskey, 2014; Northouse, 2015; Nelson & Cohen, 2015).

The participants in this study noted the need for an ideal leader in the Pentecostal church, a leader who stands in front and help other leaders and members to carry out the same tasks and fulfill a mutual obligation towards the church's vision. At the same time, leaders can develop solutions that connect to the collective vision of the church.

Many church leaders do not possess the necessary expertise in accounting, administration, and leadership. Leaders may not have the leadership skills to allocate and apportion tasks and assignments to other individuals and to prepare the aims and purposes upon which the church is managed (Rosenberg Hansen & Ferlie, 2016). The participants identified the need for leaders to promote efforts to shape and manage the members of each congregation within the church environment to align with the main standards and policies of the Pentecostal church.

The study's findings confirmed that some participants perceived the transformational or servant leadership styles to be the main approaches that can resolve the root cause of the problem of leadership within the Pentecostal church. All the participants shared the view that managing a church requires a unique blend of spiritual experience and business experience from a leader. To be successful, leaders need to possess both types of experience to generate prosperity and keep up with the needs of members, disciples, community sponsors, and the church.

Management training is an essential segment of the formation of the church. The participants recognized certain management skills within the church that were essential for growth but asserted that the shortage of adequate training in these areas provided to leaders and members by the church administration has led to a greater number of inexperienced leaders within the church. The participants saw managing workers, individuals, finance, mission, conferences, and meetings as significant facets of leadership.

The findings also confirmed an agreement among the participants that they were extremely motivated as a result of transformational leaders' inspiration. The participants described that transformational leaders' inspirational motivation improved their perception of motivation during the performance of their duties in the church. All the participants mentioned that the leaders' leadership style and character might have an impact on the growth of the church. As the success or failure of the church is highly dependent on the leadership style practiced by the leaders in the church, identifying the leadership style of any leader within the church is significant to realizing its achievement (Bottomley et al., 2014; Dinh et al., 2014).

The participants emphasized that effective communication among leaders and members is the most significant practice to determine success for the church. Numerous remarks from the participants signified the importance that leaders engage in direct and truthful communication with members and other individuals they serve. Participants asserted that the leaders must keep members well-informed of advancement, issues, and recent progress.

All the participants expressed that the most vital practices and duties for the pastors should be prayer, devotion, and arrangement of sermons. The pastors, however, realized that they work in a situation where their power is vital for propelling decisions and accomplishments in church. The implication, therefore, was that pastors and leaders in the Pentecostal church are actually in the church not only to preach and teach but also to manage and to prepare other leaders and members to serve the individuals within the church and the community outside the church. Fausing, Joensson, Lewandowski, and Bligh (2015) described a church establishment or leadership practice as favorable to inspiring individuals, by participating in making decisions and sharing of leadership.

Participants who were members of congregations expressed the need for leadership development within the church. Participants maintained that pastors and leaders should regularly assess and review the leadership training programs to develop members. An establishment's leadership training and growth strategy must be allied with the main values of the establishment; the practice must inspire members, involve the interests of interior and exterior sponsors, and offer members new and added services (Peterlin, 2016). The findings of this study confirmed that leadership training boosts the viable strategies for a church establishment. As church leaders grasp how to teach, mentor, and encourage members and others to exhibit leadership capacity, an effective system of leadership capability develops inside the church establishment.

The participants expressed standard tasks that church leaders must perform such as servanthood, inspiring, motivating, staying humble, listening, accepting criticism, and teaching. Participants characterized these tasks as central to leaders' success in motivating church members to achieve their objectives and assist in the growth of church membership. All participants who were deacons emphasized that the servant leadership style is the simplest style that provides opportunities for leaders to develop or grow within the church.

The focus group revealed their perception that evangelism and following up with individuals who attend the church are key to increasing membership. The focus group participants felt that membership growth is essential for the church, and the leaders must develop a relationship with the individuals who attend church. The focus group participants further added that too often pastors and leaders in churches do not connect in meaningful ways with these individuals.

The focus group participants agreed that one of the reasons individuals attend the Pentecostal church is because of the preaching of the word of God, and they hoped that the pastors and leaders would maintain that practice. These focus group participants credited the growth of the Pentecostal church membership to the effective preaching of the word of God by the pastors and their honest style of communicating the importance of the scriptures to the church congregation.

Recommendations for Further Research

Further research is necessary to validate the main themes that emerged from this research since only 40 individuals participated in this study. Researchers might further obtain detailed answers by employing an alternative qualitative method, such as phenomenology, to analyze the same research study. While the previous literature hinted at the great influence that leadership has on the church, a shortage persists in research that identifies the real leadership qualities, conduct, and styles that contribute to church membership growth, neighborhood inspiration, and member assistance. The conceptual framework of this study incorporated the perception of numerous researchers to deal with the gap in the literature and capture the main components required by church leaders to perform an effective part in the growth and influence of the Pentecostal church, including members, the community, and the broader world.

This study may also be replicated by future researchers who explicitly concentrate on numerous church denominations that include effective church leaders who are geared towards creating a change within the church and its community. The Pentecostal church has guidelines and procedures for leaders and members within the church. Therefore, future researchers should determine whether various leadership styles perform well in some church establishments or if the style of leadership centers on the congregation attending church, the surrounding community, or the leaders' capability to create a positive change.

The findings established that the performance of servant leadership may demand different opinions and visions for the senior pastors and leaders. The findings might offer a reliable basis for recognizing the practices of Pentecostal church leaders in Alexandria and Springfield, Virginia. In order to expand this research, researchers from other church denominations, states, and cities can offer cooperation, agreeing for the research to be performed through subsections at stages of leadership in the Pentecostal church. For instance, a researcher may cooperate with researchers from other church denominations and smaller churches within the locality to influence their community.

A similar arrangement can be employed for a comparison of Pentecostal churches in states such as North Carolina, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, California, Georgia, Alabama, Illinois, Florida, and Texas. In such situations, the information would signify the leadership style or practices of Pentecostal church leaders from numerous experiences and potentials to increase church growth. Data from different viewpoints might better inform future church leaders about leadership styles to be a successful and effective leader within the Pentecostal church and the church community.

Researchers may focus on the obligations, duties, and approaches of effective Pentecostal church leadership. Recommendation from the individuals who participated in this research regarding the responsibilities of a leader, the massive tasks that the job requires, and the obligations of leading individuals who do not want to transform within the church or ministry. A future study might also help future and current leaders from numerous denominational and non-denominational churches.

Finally, recommendations to ensure that leadership training becomes well-organized for leaders and members of the Pentecostal churches include (a) create scripted rules, (b) obtain suitable training, records, and tools, (c) distribute the general vision of the church as a non-profit establishment, and (d) offer training or qualifications for the leaders from a professional or skilled leadership trainer to leaders and members within the church.

Implications

The full-range leadership theory, as applied to this study, included the transactional and transformational leadership models (Bass, 1996). Findings from this study aligned with previous literature and enlarged the application of the servant, transformational, and transactional leadership styles to leaders within the Pentecostal church. The definition and concepts of servant leadership style, as described by Greenleaf (1977), offered a complete account of the kind of leadership style appropriate for Pentecostal churches within Alexandria and Springfield, Virginia. The objective was to present a different leadership style for the current Pentecostal churches to develop effective leaders and church membership growth.

According to Bass (1996), the full-range leadership model characterizes leaders who display both the transactional and transformational leadership styles depending upon the location and setting of the organization. The transformational and transactional frameworks were appropriate for this study because those leadership theories presented an extensive notion of leadership styles that were useful in this exploration of leadership conduct in both religious and nonreligious establishments (Rowold, 2008).

Significant and complete reports centered on the research questions investigated the problem of diminishing growth of church membership and its connection to church leadership styles in the Pentecostal churches in Alexandria and Springfield, Virginia. Maintaining a general focus on leadership conduct was essential to this research while the broad scope of styles and conduct was important to explain the leaders' and members' leadership practices aimed at increasing church membership growth.

Leaders and their leadership styles were significant and influential within these participating Pentecostal churches. Therefore, this vital function is considered to be crucial to the functioning of Pentecostal churches. According to the findings of this research, the Pentecostal church leaders and members implied that the churches are not competently equipped to train leaders and members because of the lack of adequate training programs, reliance on old fashioned strategies, and absence of current technology. Findings revealed the participating Pentecostal churches were not applying consistent organizational procedures to train the leaders and members to develop motivational and leadership practices to become effective leaders.

Such training could assist leaders in identifying the leadership styles in use within the church. The enhancement of these leadership abilities might influence the leader's capability to involve, encourage, and inspire church members to achieve successful church growth. Offering essential training programs to church leaders and members can improve their computer skills and provide them with an effective means of connecting with other individuals. Masenya and Booyse (2016) mentioned that supervising training from other sections of study might be modified to supplement the original training of pastors in their everyday managerial responsibilities.

Also, the increasing change in religious activity in the world renders it vital for leaders and members to receive training at an initial stage and then yearly review training to ensure that leaders within the Pentecostal church are conscious of the most up-to-date communications on the church's rules and program policies. Leaders in religious establishments who want their establishments to stay significant in the surrounding community and within the business atmosphere should communicate the vision with members and other individuals, establish a pleasant atmosphere, and make regular rules in their establishments (Kurtessis et al., 2017).

Transformational leaders should communicate knowledge with members regarding structural activity and upcoming transformations (Balaji & Krishnan, 2014; Zogjani & Raci, 2015). Transformational leaders appear effective through group actions that advance the confidence, inspiration, and standards of their members (Jyoti & Bhau, 2015). Standards related to servant leader characteristics included (a) building hope, (b) showing interest to others, (c) representing discipline, (d) pursuing the basic principles for the establishment, (e) exhibiting kindness in activities and faith in every person, (f) addressing the demands of members and the establishment, (g) developing a situation for peace and coordination within the establishment, and (h) supporting members' happiness (McCann et al., 2014).

CONCLUSIONS

This qualitative exploratory case study comprises an account of activities, qualities, and policies from Pentecostal church leaders and members in Alexandria and Springfield, Virginia. The interviews gathered specific information, explored the inspiration beyond the leaders' quest to be effective, and inquired about a careful design idea for church membership growth. The information offered in this dissertation signifies information regarding the practices of leaders in four Pentecostal churches who are actively serving their respective churches.

The church leaders and members interviewed for this research study presented their perceptions of their participation in leadership positions and their leaders' leadership styles, their church's contributions to the community, and how those leadership styles impacted membership growth. The findings of this study confirmed the link between church leaders' decision-making abilities, their capability to be ethical, the use of the Bible for spiritual guidance, their readiness to help others, and their transformation in the church. The findings were consistent with three leadership theories: servant leadership, transformational leadership, and transactional leadership, and answered the main research questions. The Pentecostal church leaders' leadership styles have played a significant part in the effectiveness of leaders and church membership growth. The participants characterized the Pentecostal church leaders' desire to communicate the vision of the church to members and other individuals in the community as vital to bringing new people to the church. The participants confirmed that in the Pentecostal church, proper strategic programs for development and good responsibilities are influential in training leaders.

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