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Original Research Article

Adventist Church Youth Strategies for Leadership in Nyanchwa Station, South Kenya Conference

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Abstract: Leadership is a dynamic aspect of society which needs a multifaceted approach for effectiveness. In the church, especially the Adventist church in Nyanchwa Station, South Kenya Conference, young people are not fully involved in leadership, which poses a great challenge for the future management of the church. This calls for a need to research on Adventist church youth strategies for leadership to that would open ways on the inclusion of the young people in the managerial positions of the church. This study was informed by Contingency Leadership Theory (CLT) by Fielder, which informs that leadership depends on other contingent factors. The target population was 300 respondents with a sample size of 169 informants. Censors, purposive and simple random were used as sampling techniques for specific respondents. The study found that the involvement of young people in the leadership of the church is a complex and multifaceted affaire that needs diverse church strategies for its realization. It recommended the Adventist church in Nyanchwa Station to provide young people opportunities to enable them acquire leadership skills and experiences for the good of the church.
Keywords: Inclusion, Managerial, Strategies, Inclusion, Transformative Leadership.

BACKGROUND

Today, the major challenge in most Christian churches is the inclusion of young people in the leadership structure where critical decisions about the church are made, which leads to many dysfunctional leadership (Delbecq, 2018). As argued by Michelle, *et al.*, (2013), many Christian churches are experiencing youth leadership vacuum in their structural organization as marked by the decline of youth committed to the leadership of their churches. But the critical issue is that the church with no youth to take up its leadership and related mission activities is a dying church or a church without a future.

An empirical study by Mutura (2017) with 13,000 participants from 186 countries all over the world highlighted that youth have limited opportunities for effective participation in decision-making organs and processes of various organizations, including the church. Young people feel excluded and marginalized in their churches and communities since their voices are taken not to be significant and therefore not represented. The same is reiterated in the study by Christens and Dolan (2011) which expressed that while youth may be willing to create change in the running of their local churches in terms of management, they often have limited leadership opportunities since the adults in their respective communities have not tapped into or developed youth leadership potential or represented their voices when decisions are made. This jeopardizes and compromises a fruitful future leadership of the church as there is lack of a progressive transitional leadership experiences. The regrettable thing in this is that by ignoring youth voice, local church communities lose a precious resource and any decisions made by those in authority are in-congruent with the needs and aspirations of the young people.

In the United States empirical studies by Kidder (2008) informed that more than 60% of the Adventist membership is over 45% and only 9% are under 25 years. While a study by Sahlin (2011) noted that most Adventist churches are experiencing what is termed as "graying of Adventism", which refers to the aging membership of the church and so to the management structure of the church resulting from the absence of young people and what they represent in the church. The reason to this

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exemplified by McNae (2010) and Dempster and Lizzio (2007) who express that one of the major problems is that many youth programs are designed from an adult perspective, without taking into consideration youths' ideas, skills and needs around leadership for a meaningful organization and mission of the church. In reference to Australian church, Finlay (2010) asserts that lack of the youth voice and power in decision-making does not reach the goal of allowing young people to shape their communities.

While in the African context, a study by Myers (2017) specified that the church managerial structure is considered the decisive factor that determines the relevance of the church and also the single most contributing factor that allows the church to develop its full potentials. However, when it comes to the affairs of the young people, a report by Lausanne Occasional Paper (2005) had argued that the traditional church model in Africa, including its managerial structure is only marginally meeting the needs of the youth including their leadership voice.

In most African churches, youth ministry and commitment is reduced to church choir groups that meet once or twice weekly to practice songs for Sunday or Sabbath morning services. Even though this may give the youth some sense of church affiliation, identity and teaching, it is insufficient since youth aspirations are beyond these stipulated and desired areas of youth interests in the church to other aspects. Youth programs for leadership, especially managerial leadership are seriously lacking as the concern of the church is only to evangelize them without incorporating their voices as the plan for the ministry of the church; the existing programs are on the basic traditional levels of church operations that exclude the youth from the leadership of the programs themselves that is erroneously considered the preserve of the adult leaders. As previously argued by Delbecq (2018), there is a tendency of older leaders in the administrative and organizational structure of the church to hold firmly to their positions of heading church programs and equivocally regard the youth as a great threat to their managerial positions instead of bringing them close for mentorship in the leadership of the church.

For instance, in Kenya, a report by Gospel Centre International (2017) account that in Nyeri County, the Pentecostal churches' operations are limited to traditional forms of church operations, thereby putting minimal emphasis on key issues that affect the youth like mentorship for church leadership, delegating of church leadership duties to young upcoming leaders of the church. While the study by Gathoni and Maina (2020) indicated that the Pentecostal churches' major problem that hinders the youth from attending church and taking up leadership responsibilities is majorly informed by discontent between generations; the youth feel left out while the old people that are influential in the church seem not to take seriously the concerns of the young people. This is a critical and deep-seated matter that opens up research avenues in the area of dynamics influencing youth involvement in church leadership.

In relation to the Adventist church, a study by Mutura (2017) asserts that the church has limited opportunities that expose the youth to meaningfully participate in decision-making processes, which makes the young people feel excluded and marginalized in the running of their local churches and communities. While Okemwa (2017) and Ragira, *et al*., (2023) posit that training and inclusion of the young people in the leadership of the church is not a priority for those in the top leadership. They further postulate that the Adventist church, especially in Nyanchwa Station, and Gekomu II church in particular, there are no programs dedicated to the development of leadership skills among young pastors and youth, not even the inclusion of young church members in leadership, which should be a fundamental component of youth ministry. In South Kenya Conference, despite the various documented works on Seventh - day Adventist church, there are youth programs like the Sabbath school and also youth ministry, which are more on religious instructions and youth for evangelism. In the existing programs, there is practically no plans for skill development in youth managerial leadership. This shows that there is no youth characterized framework for youth and leadership as the church is swallowed up by the adult dominated church organizational framework that gives little room for the youth.

Thus, the outlined gaps call for a research on youth strategies for leadership in the Adventist church as an integral part of the church's mission to create youth opportunities not just to participate in the pastoral activities of the church but also to be involved in decision-making where they learn to lead and take ownership of the church.

Statement

The Christian church in her organization prioritizes youth ministry and engagement but when it comes to youth leadership of the church it appears not to be a priority. In context, the SDA church manual (2015) on church organization and leadership clearly indicates that every member of the church has a voice in choosing officers of the church but this is not the case when it comes to leadership of the church, especially in choosing young people to managerial positions of the church where issues and decisions are discussed and made. There is no robust youth and leadership framework in the church as it is fascinated by the adult controlled organizational framework that gives little room for the youth to lead.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Aligned with the need to engage more youth leaders is a desire by youth for more opportunities to act as leaders and change agents in their local churches. A

number of studies on youth leadership point to the importance of creating and engaging different strategies that promote youth in church leadership (Christens & Dolan, 2011; Taft & Gordon, 2013). For instance, church youth programs are a necessary strategy for the nurturing and empowerment of young people for leadership. On this, Chong-Ho and Tameifuna (2014) contend that quality youth programs create vibrant personal religion and commitments to the church aspects which are equally indispensable for effective ministry. Inclusive and inspirational church programs are the pillar of a successful youth ministry. Lacking such programs that speak to their reality compel the youth to stop going go to church or even to go to other denominations.

A popular strategy is to engage or even hire youth pastors or workers, who will take up ministries, especially those that are youth related or when the youth are more present. Youth coordinators or directors suggested by Chong-Ho and Tameifuna (2014) have the ability to resonate with the aspirations of the youth and thereby able to increase the frequency of youth participation in church programs and activities, develop quality programs for the various church membership groups, enhance youth perception in the church and even keep them loyal to their church organization. Deficiency of quality youth programs in the church is a recipe for the young people to go elsewhere or to other churches or denominations that are engaging and interesting to them. Quality programs are the pillar of a successful youth ministry.

Mentorship is another important strategy for the nurture of youth for leadership. Young people need to be heard and mentored into leadership. Davie *et al.*, (2017) argues that if the Pentecostal church set ups does not take charge of the youth in mentoring them, then it is likely to lose the youth thereby putting the future of the church in jeopardy. While Chiroma and Cloete (2015) argue that mentorship plays an important role in the holistic development of the youth in areas like spiritual formation, character, ministry formation and leadership. The incorporation of mentorship programs in churches is necessary to shape the youth in terms of both their spiritual growth and skill development. Black *et al.*, (2011) observe that young people are invited to participate in church communities without necessarily being mentored. While McNeil (2006) and Martensen *et al.*, (2014) mention that the lack of expertise of adults in areas of experience and mentorship for youth involvement does not make youth involvement in whichever area of the church to be meaningful.

When adults model behaviours and nurture skills in the youth but do not force their ideas or opinions on to them or take a directive approach to leadership, youth learn internalize those behaviours and incorporate them into their views of leadership and effect similar behaviours in leadership roles they take later on. The youth need spiritual leaders who can identify themselves with them and have the ability to instil hope to them and give them assurance of the importance of the church in both individual and collective life of the society. Harms and Credé (2010) contend that mentoring others is consistent with the principles of transformational leadership that position leaders to encourage learning, achievement, and individual growth in the nurture and development of life skills.

Education and training for leadership is another strategy for the youth in the church. This strategy comes from the Holy Scriptures 2 Timothy 2:2, where the Apostle Paul instructs Timothy to train leaders. Paul urges: "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others." This directive informs the endeavour of most studies (Canales, 2014; Devries, 2008; Heflin, 2009; Myers, 2016) to put more emphasis on spiritual, emotional, and leadership development within the youth ministry for the good of the church. Failure to adhere to this Pauline directive will put the future of the church in a serious risk. In education and training, young people are able to develop their leadership, managerial and service skills for the good of the church membership and the society at large. Canales (2014) and Clark (2008) posit that education and training, especially in team building, conflict management, and interpersonal skills complement each other since all have profound implications in the life of the church membership. This fills youth ministry leadership development gap that is experienced in the church and church literature. Scarcity or lack of proper education and training platforms for leadership experiences makes the transition to leadership for young people in the church difficult.

Direct youth participation in the decision-making processes of the church is another considerable and most transformative strategy. Taft and Gordon (2013) explain that engaging youth in decision-making of issues that either directly or indirectly affect their lives helps to ensure that those issues that are important to them are properly addressed. While Murphy and Johnson (2011) explain that leadership opportunities given early in life build a foundation upon which future leadership development continues to grow in the young people. This empowers young people to contribute their leadership talents and perspectives for the betterment of their church and society (Dudley, 2012). When youth are regarded as partners in decision-making and are themselves in charge of given and designed projects, their sense of ownership of the church greatly increases the chances of their successful engagement in the affairs of the church. Furthermore, positive youth involvement in church leadership is also a future-oriented, a transformational strategy which entails shaping young people and introducing them into the path of leadership of the church in the future. However, as expressed by Gould and Voelker (2012), leadership is a skill that grows with experience and therefore the youth need the

opportunities to express their acquired skills through real leadership positions. Only then will the church continue to have capable leaders for the future. Further, engaging the youth in decision-making helps conservative members of the church and those who may think that leadership is for those who are experienced elderly church members to overcome the barrier of "adultism," that views the youth as too young, inexperienced and incapable to lead (Conner *et al*., 2012).

Jobson (2011) posits that participation of the youth in decision-making processes involves two aspects: developing youth development programmes that equip them with life skills and self-confidence to take up leadership positions and also is a mechanism representation of youth and voicing of their issues in the church organization. Youths can confidently speak out in the church when there is a leadership that resonates well with their ideals for the church, and in the absence of this, then there is nobody to actually speak for them.

Youth awareness is a strategy that further enhances their participation in church leadership. Sometimes young people are blamed of laxity when in actual sense they are not conscientised of their place in leadership of the church. But then this calls for openness on the part of the conventional church leadership to enlighten the youth and avail to them platforms of leaderships that they can actively take part. Lack of awareness on leadership make young people to view leadership through the lens of traditional hierarchy where it is associated with the old and experienced people and also as something of those who have special leadership qualities (Komives, *et al*., 2006). Gould and Voelker (2012) explain that leadership is and learning to lead is multifaceted in that youths learn through observational and experiential learning, mentorship, trial and error, and formal education. But regrettably, communities do not always fully take advantage of the potential youth offer (Mortensen *et al*., 2014).

Team leadership is another important strategy for youth involvement in the leadership of the church that is in most cases undermined. The sole purpose of entrenching teamwork in church leadership is to enhance a collaborative spirit for better performance since it has the element of employing diverse aspects of human resource in the various areas of operations of the church.

The unfortunate thing is that team leadership as a modern strategy in leadership is not common to many churches, especially those that employ traditional forms of leadership like authoritative and authoritarian leadership styles. In these leadership styles, the power rests on the individual church leader. But, contrary to this, team leadership brings in the aspect of partnership among leaders and groups in achieving church objectives. In team leadership disparities in age, experiences, and many others are looked as a value that feeds leadership. Kiromat (2012) recommended youth organizations in which adults team in pairs with the youth and involve youths to serve as chairpersons and vice-chairpersons, whereby adults give advice and guidance to the operations of the young people. The adults would also be actively involved in promoting conditions and opportunities for youth to develop their critical consciousness in leadership of the church. Thus, a shift to team leadership approach alternatively, specifies in broad terms the church leader's relationship to the team, a perspective which outlines leadership as social problem solving, where individual leaders are responsible for diagnosing problems that could potentially impede the achievement of group or institutional goals, engendering and planning suitable solutions to problems affecting the church as an institution, and applying those solutions within certain intricate church spheres. This cannot be achieved in a structure where leadership responsibilities are crowded on the person of one church leader.

Thus, echoing Wehmeyer, *et al.,* (2008), youth leadership should be regarded as part of the youth development process and the young people should be supported to develop their leadership abilities and to analyse their own strengths and weaknesses in relation to leadership through various available strategies. They should be helped to set personal leadership goals, and have self-esteem, confidence, motivation, and abilities to carry them out (including the ability to establish support networks in order to fully participate in church community life that will bring effective leadership change in the church.

METHODOLOGY
The study considered various clusters of respondents and different data collection tools with the sole purpose of having a significant and multifaceted representation that allowed triangulation of collected data for the objectivity of the study findings. The target population was 300 respondents with a sample size of 169 participants. This sample size was determined by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) calculation and tabulation which specifies that for a target population of 300 the appropriate sample size is 169 respondents. This was as presented in table 1.1.

Table 1.1 further illustrated that the researcher used different sampling techniques for specific clusters of respondents.

Table 1.1: The Sample Size

Target group	Target Population	Sampling procedure	Sample Size	Percentage
Conference top leadership	10	Censors	10	5.9%
Conference Executive Committee Members	31	Simple Random	15	8.9%
Pastors	11	Censors	11	6.5%
Senior Youth Leaders	60	Simple Random	20	11.8%
Station Executive Committee Members	18	Purposive	8	4.7%
Church Youth members	170	Simple Random	105	62.1%
Total	**300**		**169**	**100%**

Source: Researcher (2024)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The discussion of the findings was facilitated by the Likert Scale format where respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreements or disagreements on specific study themes and also by the collected views of participants from the interviews and focused group discussions. The responses are as illustrated in table 1.2.

Table 1.2: SDA church youth strategies for leadership in Nyanchwa Station, SKC

Item	D	SD	N	A	SA	Total
Leadership workshops and seminars for skill development are vital to the development of leadership skills for the youth	R-3 %-3.3	1 1.1	5 5.6	37 41.1	44 48.9	90 100%
Top church leadership to involve the youth in the leadership of the church through Youth Coordinators	R-7 %-7.8	6 6.7	2 2.2	48 53.3	27 30.0	90 100%
Mentorship is key for effective youth leaders	R-5 %-5.6	6 6.7	7 7.8	51 56.7	21 23.3	90 100%
Top church management to have a listening working relationship with the youth Ministries Department to train youth in administration	R-1 %-1.1	5 5.6	8 8.9	39 43.3	37 41.1	90 100%
Design youth programs from the youths' strengths and perspectives	R-3 %-3.3	4 4.4	11 12.2	29 32.2	43 47.8	90 100%
Listening to the youth	R-10 %-11.1	8 8.9	4 4.4	39 43.3	29 32.2	90 100%
Top church leadership to work closely with youth coordinators	R-0 %-0.0	0 0.0	0 0.0	55 61.1	35 38.8	90 100%
Youth participation in the decision-making processes	R-1 %-1.1	0 0.0	4 4.4	55 61.1	30 33.3	90 100%
Team leadership	R-5 %-5.6	2 2.2	3 3.3	72 89	8 8.9	90 100%

Key: R – Respondents, %-Percentage
Source: Field Data, 2024

Table 1.2 illustrates results on various areas or strategies that should be seriously considered by the Adventist church in Nyanchwa Station, South Kenya Conference for the inclusion of young people in the managerial leadership of the church. The first item was that of workshops and seminars. The thesis for discussion of the findings was that leadership workshops and seminars are vital tools for the development of leadership skills of young people for the good of the church. The questionnaire findings indicated that 4 (4.4%) of the respondents were in disagreement, 5 (5.6%) were neutral, and an overwhelming majority of 81 (90.0%) were in full agreement of the thesis. The findings were corroborated with those from the interviews and FGDs which informed:

Workshops and seminars are platforms where the young people are trained and given information that enable them to know what is expected of them when they become leaders in the church. Through them they learn from the experiences of others on how to lead the church. Undermining these platforms leads to having church leaders who are not informed of their responsibility of building leadership skills in young people (KINF, 1).

Church leadership despite being a call, is also a trait that needs to be nurtured and developed. This is where workshops and seminars play a fundamental role in nurturing that trait. As an elder in the church, I have participated in numerous leadership workshops that have shaped my leadership responsibility in the church. Because of this, I consider myself a successful leader in the church (KINF, 27).

Leadership programs should be designed from the strengths and perspective of the youths themselves. In most cases programs are designed by adults who do

not even understand the concerns of the young people in the church. This is something that our church should be conscious of to avoid overloading the young people with what may not be necessary to them and the church in general (KINF, 18).

How can we know about leadership in the church if we do not get the necessary knowledge to develop our leadership potential? Even in the area of youth leaders, they are not delegated to perform some managerial responsibilities in the church. This is why we as young people we need much training on leadership we learn from other knowledgeable and experienced leaders (FGD, 21)

The incontestable fact in the findings is that youth programs for leadership nurture are important because not only do they channel youth energy in a positive way, but also it prepares them for the next generation of church leadership since they are active workforce of the church. They offer a variety of skill-building platforms where both hard and soft skills are relevant to leadership ranging from relationships, communication, leadership styles, problem-solving, conflict resolution and transformation, etc., are addressed. Such programs yield positive outcomes in the youth as future leaders of the church increasing their motivation, knowledge, self-esteem, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills that necessary for leadership and also decreases negative leadership attitudes. When their leadership skills are developed, then they are in position to encourage others to work collectively with them to achieve given church goals.

The field data also points to the fact that real education and training on leadership needs a spiritual foundation since the church is an entity for spiritual development of members. Church leadership without a spiritual bearing is itself self-defeating. Leaders are to combine their spiritual well-being and the leadership responsibilities and demands, giving presidency to the spiritual aspects that define it. Sometimes, church leaders tend to prioritize the material well-being at the experience of spiritual aspects even though the church does not undermine individual church leader's material development.

The second item for discussion was about the top church leadership's involvement of the youth in the leadership of the church through Youth Coordinators. On this study postulate, the questionnaire field findings showed that 13 (14.4%) of the respondents were in disagreement, 2 (2.2%) was undecided; while an overwhelming majority of 75 (83.3%) were in support of the thesis. This data was equally triangulated with those from the interviews and FGDs that opined:

> When I was a young man, I was lucky to be introduced to the managerial role of the church. May be because I had a very inspiring pastor who supported me and ensured that I was always with him whenever issues of the church were addressed. He delegated responsibilities to me, even those that were sensitive to the church he always gave me a chance to work through them and confidentially share with him (KINF, 22).

I am learning a lot from my church council that have always given me the chance to participate as secretary enabling to be informed of all that is going on in the Station. This prepares me well in terms of understanding the operations of the church in Nyanchwa Station when the opportunity comes to serve as a leader in the church. I wish that other churches also give my fellow young church faithful such an opportunity (FGD, 4).

The field data indicate that youth leadership development in the Adventist church in Nyanchwa Station is not a divisive viewpoint, but a common mission that is shared between youth and adults, which calls for the youth/adult intentional partnership that affords each equal access, and opportunities to learn from each, use their leadership skills as they engage in effective church leadership. Working closely with youth coordinators or directors have the ability to resonate with the aspirations of the youth, which in essence has the ability to increase the frequency of youth participation in the running of church programs and activities, develop quality programs for the various church membership groups, enhance positive youth perception of the church and leadership in particular. Further, the leadership of the church a open a platform for consultation with individual youth coordinators as it sparks new and innovative ideas. The youth coordinators represent the interests of youth ministries in the church boards and in the church council.

However, the point to note is that if youth-in-governance is to become a definite factor in the leadership of the Adventist church in Nyanchwa Station, then it cannot remain only with the youth coordinators in the youth ministry. Rather it has to become an official administrative option that involves the unity of intent of both the youth leaders and adults, while jointly initiating opportunities that permit young people to articulate their individual concerns for the church, classify their own church leadership policy issues that speak to them, strategize their own programs, and consolidate their own action groups for the good of the church. All this permits them to define for themselves who they are as leaders in the church and how they want to make a change in their church and Christian communities. But also youth coordinators need to be conscious of the fact that they are not simply being co-opted to leadership as leaders but should see it as a call to practice leadership. It is experimental leadership.

Another factor was that of direct youth participation in the decision-making processes of the church as a considerable strategy. The views of

questionnaire respondents showed that 1 (1.1%), 4 (4.4%) were undecided, and an overwhelming majority of 85 (94.4%) were in full agreement with the postulate. On the same postulate, the views of participants in the interviews and FGDs added:

> When the young people are directly included in the decision-making organ of the church, they learn how to handle church matters. But then this demands that church leadership should have a clear vision of their participation in decision making. Sometimes church leadership is not very clear of what it needs from the youth; this lack of clarity contributes to reluctance in including the youth in decision making of church matters (KINF, 16).

The verbatim findings from the field point to the fact that youth involvement in decision making organ of the church is the most transformative power of the church within the managerial arrangements. Decisions are made for the good of the church and those making them should be experienced and informed of their responsibility. If young people have to make informed decisions for the church, then they ought to be introduced into it early enough where they are able to learn from other experienced leaders. By not being involved in decision making, the youth are losing an important platform where they are able to learn and acquire decision making skills and consequently develop their leadership abilities, managerial and service skills for the church membership and the society at large.

Thus, the argument in the field data is that in order to truly develop leadership skills, youth must engage in decision-making opportunities in which they are offered the chance to apply what they have learned from textbooks. When youth are regarded as partners in decision-making and are themselves in charge of given and designed projects, their sense of ownership greatly increases the chances of their successful implementation. The mistake the church makes is to charge leaders to make decisions when have never had the chance to do so when they were young; instead, they learn to make decisions when they are on the job.

Concerning top church management to have a listening working relationship with the youth Ministries Department, the questionnaire field findings showed that 16 (17.8%) were in disagreement, 8 (8.9%), while an overwhelming majority of 76 (84.4%) were in support of the thesis. Since the study could not take these findings as absolute, it triangulated them with those form the interviews and FGDs where it considered the following:

> The best way the top of the management team can use to have a close working relation with the youth ministry is to listen to the views of the youth present to it by the youth coordinators. Sometimes our views are presented through our youth coordinators but the top leadership of the church do not want to listen to those views. Our

youth coordinators are frustrated to the point that they feel like dropping out of their responsibility. This may not be good for the church and especially us the young people who invest most of our time and love for the church (FGD, 16).

Youths have lots of innovative ideas that can constructively build the leadership and functionings of the church. Sometimes those ideas are considered infantile and therefore not listened to. This buries new productive initiatives and potentials present in our youth. It is, therefore, to listen to those ideas even if they seem not to point to anything constructive (KINF, 6).

The church has many programs that need young people to inform and implement. When we fail to involve the young people, we run the danger of coming up with programs that are mismatched with real needs of the church, or may overlook the greatest openings for lasting impacts in the church (KINF, 12).

The field data point to the fact that listening to the youth is a virtue that the church leadership should embrace to make them feel part of the church. This should be done with utmost humility and patience as a demonstration of their importance in the church. A feeling of being listened to is in itself an inducement of other feelings like the sense of belong in the church and a justification to work for the good of the SDA church in Nyanchwa Station, SKC. When the youth decide to speak up is itself a communication that they ought to be listened to and considered as members of the church.

On mentorship as a strategy for youth leadership in the SDA church in Nyanchwa Station, the findings from the questionnaire showed that 11 (12.2%) were not in support, 7 (7.8%) were neutral, while an overwhelming majority of 72 (80%) were in full support of the thesis that youth mentorship for leadership is key for the SDA church in Nyanchwa Station. The questionnaire responses were triangulated with those from the interviews and FGDs which asserted:

Great church leaders leave a legacy done. And this legacy is realized through mentoring of young people to the leadership of the church. The legacy serves as an inspiration for future church generations. But the reality in our church is opposite as leaders live as if they are there forever. This is wrong. If we as leaders love the church, then we need to prepare the future generation of leaders (KINF, 20).

I have never heard of mentorship programs for leadership in my church. Do they really exist anywhere else of this only happens in my church? If the situation is like this in other churches then, this worries me a lot because we may have future leaders that have not been properly mentored and therefore have a serious leadership vacuum (FGD, 12).

The field data is explicit to the fact that young people are in most cases invited to participate in church communities without necessarily being mentored. But youth mentorship for leadership is an important strategy for the nurture of young people for the future leadership of the SDA church in Nyanchwa Station. Mentoring and guiding young people for leadership in the church imparts leadership values and vision while instilling a sense of pride and ownership of the church. A meaningful leadership legacy motivates individuals to take up the responsibility of leadership and as young people they make a positive difference in their own spheres of influence in the church. Mentorship acts as a roadmap for future teams, providing them with guidance and direction, while allowing them to build upon the achievements of their predecessors. This enables continuity and progress in the leadership of the church. The point that the SDA church in Nyanchwa Station should take into account, which also resonates with the field findings is that mentorship takes is cognizant of the fact that leaders are made, not born.

To think that young people are born leaders and therefore should wait for their time to lead the church as the old leaders exit, is a myth and therefore a hindrance to adoption of a leadership development mentorship strategy. Further, mentorship is alive to the fact that leadership is not a title but a value-based responsibility that calls for integrity, vision, love, humility, and other related values for the service of the church and humanity. But this consideration of leadership should not dismiss leadership as a trait that needs skill development through education and training. When adult church leaders model young people for leadership and nurture their leadership skills, the youth learn internalize those leadership values and incorporate them into their views of leadership and effect similar values in leadership roles they are to take later on. The youth need spiritual leaders whom they can identify themselves with.

Mentorship enhances youth awareness of their participation in the church leadership, and also ensures the continuity of the church tradition and allows young people to develop a value based foundation for church leadership. As the field verbatim data pointed out, sometimes young people are blamed of laxity when in actual sense they are not mentored into the leadership of the church, they may not even aware of it. And for this to happen, the conventional church leadership should be open to enlighten the youth and avail to them platforms of leaderships for their participation. Lack of awareness on leadership make young people to view leadership through the lens of traditional hierarchy and Trait Theory of Leadership (TTL) where it is associated with the old and experienced people and also as something of those who have special leadership qualities.

On the theme of listening to the youth, responses from the questionnaire illustrated that 18 (20%) of the participants were in disagreement, 4 (4.4%)

were neutral, and 68 (75.6%) were in support of the postulate. On the same postulate, verbatim results from the field showed:

> As young people we do think that we are not listened to, especially when it comes to matters related to the organization of the church. There is fear of some issues, especially those that seem to be challenging the status quo of the church leadership. Now our main question is: To whom should we go to? Who should listen to our issues? (FGD, 6)

Our voices as young people in the church seem not to resonate well with our church leaders. Our views even if they appear to be silly, non is willing to listen to them. Those in the leadership only want to talk to us as we listen but do not want to listen to us. Even if we present our views through our youth coordinators, we are not given answers to them. This does not make us feel part of the church (FGD, 18).

The field data, especially the verbatim data is expressive of the fact that the church leaders have the tendency to talk to the youth as they are expected to listen, while little are the youth listened to when they talk. This undermines the vitality, fresh perspectives that the youth bring to the church. In situations where adult church leaders listen as the youth talk to them on church matters leads to the young people receiving understanding and support from rather than receiving advice and counsel. Positive talks and interactions youth have with adult leaders have a profound impact on them as future leaders of the church. Sometimes talks with young people in the church may not necessarily mean having solutions to problems raised as those issues are always open and wide-ranging; as young people they may stray unto territories that challenge the comfort zone of those in leadership. But this should never be avoided for listening to the youth builds a positive image to the youth and a sense of belonging and of being accepted in the church. It is important to give a voice to young people in addressing their concerns in the church.

Young church leaders have the advantage of possessing new leadership perspectives because of their creative mind-set; they have the capacity to effectively address complex problems of their time in the church than what the elderly leaders can do. For instance, young people are more adept with technology, and therefore, are well-informed in dealing with the dynamic nature of today's church as they are more conversant with digital apparatuses and technological expertise that the church needs and cannot avoid. This is where the youth's digital knowledge and creativity can be invaluable to the church, thereby introducing noble viewpoints and creative solutions to problems or challenges that the church may possibly face. This is it is important that the youths be listened to and given humble time to express themselves for the good of the church. The church

therefore has to create spaces for growth and connection of every generation of members.

Finally, the study discussed the field findings on team leadership as a viable strategy for the involvement of young people in the leadership of the SDA church in Nyanchwa Station, SKC. Responses from the questionnaire indicated that 7 (7.8%) were not agreement with the postulate that team leadership is a viable strategy for youth leadership in the church, 3 (3.3%) were undecided, while an overwhelming majority of 80 (88.9%) respondents were of the view that teaming leadership is a viable strategy for the inclusion of young people in the leadership of the church. This data was triangulated with that from the interviews and FGDs where participants opined:

> Many church leaders prefer to work alone, be autonomous in their respective positions and undermine the role a team can play in leadership. When leaders work as a team, it is more engaging, involve creativity, innovation and positive criticism spirit in the leadership of the church (KINF, 13).

When leaders with different leadership perspectives and styles come together, innovative ideas around leadership arise which enrich each other. Team leadership has a lot of advantages that benefit leaders including those who have just entered leadership. However, this something that is most undermined in church leadership (KINF, 21).

One of the most important component of team leadership is delegating responsibilities to other young people. This incorporates various skills and positively impacts the entire leadership of the church. This something that some of our church leaders fear to do; they prefer to shoulder the whole load of leading the church on their own (KINF, 25).

The field findings, especially verbatim data shows that this is the most overlooked strategy that the SDA church in Nyanchwa Station should consider in its leadership endeavours. If the youth are to be involved in the leadership of the church, then it is inevitable for the church leadership to embrace team leadership strategy. They have specific and unique roles, where the performance of each role contributes to a collective success of the church. This means that the causes of team failure may reside not only in member inability, but also in their collective failure to coordinate and synchronize their individual contributions.

Teamwork leadership calls for delegation of managerial responsibilities to young leaders to allow them use their time and skills on the tasks they can do best. When young people are given specific assignments, they learn how to handle different types of demands and situations and manage them as a team. The field findings indicated the component of delegating managerial responsibilities as an important strategy of succession planning which church leaders should effectively use in the attempts to have focused future leaders. In delegating duties, young leaders learn how to identify appropriate work to be done and devise methods of doing it, while maintaining checks and balance on the delegated work.

But the problem is that church leadership is afraid to delegate duties to young leaders probably because they think they are able to do the managerial duties better than them. Learning the art of delegation by old leaders aids particular leaders to involve young people in the church. Delegating duties leverage the diverse strengths of the team and allows them to share, which not only reduces one's own workload, but also develops other members of the team in terms of skills and expertise, and also creates inclusive opportunities for leadership leading to a positive impact on the church.

It is important that the Adventist church in Nyanchwa Station makes a bold move to have a youth council or youth leadership team and a youth spiritual life committee for the churches where they are encouraged to guide and direct the respective underpinning programs themselves. Properly functioning and thriving church leadership teams where the youths are part improve creativity in the leadership of the church, and consequently service to communities. Team leadership is essential in creating a competitive advantage for the church, improve innovation in the field of leadership, and achieve leadership goals in the most efficient and effective ways. The misleading practice is that most often, teams are formed to accomplish specific tasks that are considered to be of importance, but not always given the skills or proper training to reach peak performance.

In team leadership, young people in the church as well as officers and non-officers to work together with or beside adult officers and non-officers, of both the Station and the local church. This is informed by the need to consider expertise of each leader and the dynamism of issues around leadership open up new complex areas of the church that a single individual can't possess the necessary knowledge to address those issues as many brains are better than one; it, therefore, maximizes collective intelligence of church leaders coming from individual skills and strengths.

CONCLUSION

Engaging the youth in the leadership of the church should be taken as part of the mission of the Adventist church in Nyanchwa Station. But then this to be effective requires multifaceted strategies that collectively work to help conservative members of the church and those who may think that leadership is for those who are elderly and have experience; it overcomes the barrier of the erroneous philosophy of "adultism" that glories in regarding the youth as too young, inexperienced and incapable to lead the church. The

church leadership needs to be cognizant of the fact that that one is not simply trained to become a leader but also needs to be called to practice leadership.

Recommendations

The study recommended the Adventist church to provide the young people opportunities that expose them to a range of learning experiences and skills that meet the demands of transformational leadership in the growing technologically determined church.

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