

Leaders' Perspective on Nontraditional Leadership Training

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This article is based on the author's dissertation, published in 2020 at the Journal of Applied Professional Studies (JAPS)

Abstract

This study was a second-tier pilot test designed to assess the reliability and internal consistency of a combined survey instrument with an existing tool. Participants in this phase were congregational leaders. The second purpose was to examine leaders' views on their followers' competencies from nontraditional leadership skills training and to rate their competencies on selected traditional course. However, for the first dependent variable the leaders rated their own level self-efficacy for later comparison with the scores of participants and non-participants of nontraditional training. The study was cross-section survey design sent to 337 religious congregational leaders. A total of 134 participants responded or 39.76% response rate was obtained. Results of this study reveal a high internal consistency and reliability of the survey instrument where a Cronbach's Alpha of ($\alpha > .80$) was obtained in the three variables. Other analysis conducted from the major and moderating variables found no statistically significant relationship between the independent and dependent variables Pearson's r ($p > .05$). Thus, the central research question of the main study was maintained as "What is the impact of nontraditional leadership training on participants' self-efficacy and latent potential for sustainable leadership skills development. Reliability and internal consistency were confirmed, and the survey tool adopted. Supplemental analyses reveal important feedback discussed on implication for practice and recommendations for future research.

Keywords: Leaders, followers, self-efficacy, latent potential, nontraditional leadership.

Introduction

This report is the outcome of a second-tier pilot study conducted to measure the internal consistency and reliability of a research survey instrument that was combined with the General Self Efficacy (GSE) scale an existing tool widely tested for validity (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). The second purpose and choice of congregational leaders was to examine their perception of the outcomes of a nontraditional leadership training model known as Sisters Leadership Development Initiative (SLDI). The leaders under reference in this study are also known as major superiors who play an important role in the decision-making process to recruit participants to the program from their congregations. The study also sought to investigate if the leaders' ratings shows a relationship between the skills of nontraditional leadership training and the traditional leadership training measured through accredited courses in Canon law, Theology, Philosophy, Church History, Sacred Scripture and the Magisterium (Can.250; 252 §3). These courses were utilized to derive the second dependent variable stated in this study as *latent potential for sustainable leadership skills development*. It was hypothesized that there would be no relationship between the nontraditional leadership training and the traditional leadership training measured through latent potential for sustainable leadership skills development. Latent potential was deemed necessary to be examined in order to determine the factors that underlie the lack of professional skills for women religious in Africa and the benefits of nontraditional leadership training. Later, this knowledge could be used to make necessary recommendations to inform policy formulations, review of existing ones and to execute best practices.

Review of Literature

There is not much information and/or research on how traditional leadership training relates to women religious in Africa south of the Sahara. Some of the salient factors and gaps identified in professional skills development correlate to low academic credentials (Bandiho, 2019; Mulenga, 2019). Current research cites other challenges such as Sisters supervising more qualified staff in practice settings which negatively impacts performance, self-esteem, motivation and sometimes a mismatch in job placements due to lack of qualifications (Bandiho, 2019; Ngundo, 2019; Njageh 2015). The leading factor for low credentials is discernible in the inconsistent education policies found in most congregations of women religious (Nakitende, 2015; Mulenga 2019). Poor representation of members in the process of policy formulation also keeps them unaware of what procedures to follow when they need professional advancement.

While vocations in Africa are on the increase, there is an association between the increase of vocations and low credentials at the recruitment of candidates to religious life, sometimes to avert a decline in vocations to religious life (Mulenga, 2019). The downside of this phenomenon is that such candidates will necessarily have to re-orient to meet the professional qualifications and government standards when they complete their formation training, in order to provide quality service in their ministries (Mulenga, 2019). Current trends show that young women have lower credentials at entrance to religious life, for instance in one study those with a bachelor's degree were 30% compared to 80% of male entrants (Ngundo & Gautier, 2018). Other factors that

challenge professional development include financial constraints and lack of sustainable projects for women religious congregations in the continent of Africa (Niba, 2019; Ngundo & Wiggins, 2017). Learning on the job and mentorship is a challenge reported mostly among women religious who are sometimes sent to serve without proper qualifications for ministry placements (Ngundo, 2019). The rapidly changing context does not favor previous trends where Sisters served without credentials. Sustainability of congregations and members could be supported when trained Sisters generate just wages and revenue for their congregations and ministries (Ngundo, 2019; Niba, 2019; Njageh, 2015).

A review of the traditional leadership models of training has been proposed as one possibility to address the lack of skills among women religious in Africa south of the Sahara. At the same time, the need to examine the factors surrounding the gap between the traditional leadership models and nontraditional leadership is also proposed. The results of this study will also be compared with the outcome of the main research outcomes. Data collected in these studies is envisioned to provide an overview of the intersection between theory and practice in women religious practice settings.

Leadership studies propose that success in organizations entails the ability of leaders “to inspire qualified people to get things done or to accept change” (Bornman & Puth, 2017, p.1) as well as their attitude and mindset (Njageh, 2015). Bornman & Puth, posit that most leaders perceive their leadership communication as flawless or even immaculate (p.3). Followers within religious congregations seem to concur with this position albeit it provides them with a sense of voicelessness. In some circumstances, studies reveal a “lack of two-way decision-making model involving dialogue in the choice of a career path for members” (Njageh, 2015, p.141). In this study Njageh reports experiences of some participants, one respondent said “a sister is asked to pack her things and report to a given college” Another participant added, “the superior decides for you and you have to do it” (p.142). However, Njageh also reports that some congregations do consult with their members and an agreement arrived at before they proceed for studies.

This pilot study seeks to determine if there will a relationship between the view of leaders on their own self-efficacy and self-efficacy of followers from the main study. Secondly, they are asked to rate their followers’ competencies after which their outcomes will be compared with their followers own rating in the same items. Lack of research on skills development and fields of study were identified as other gaps in professional development, as well as lack of followers’ involvement in policy making processes (Nakitende, 2015). For instance, in three different studies, there were similar views reported by participants who indicate that their congregational policies of education are not clear (Njageh, 2015), they are wanting (Nakitende, 2015) and they are inconsistent (Mulenga, 2019). In a rapidly changing context, leadership too pushes for the need for individuals to experience and perceive changes recurrently (Bornman & Puth, 2017). To facilitate such experiences, Njageh (2015) submits that policies for professional development ought to be accessible to all members for their information and use.

Other studies have found that there is a relationship between the wellbeing of organizations and job performance as it pertains to leader-follower appraisals (Clarke & Mahadi, 2014). Clarke and

Mahadi posit that both recognition and mutual respect contribute to followers' well-being. Exclusion of stakeholders systematically derails motivation when implementing major decisions on matters that pertain to their well-being (Mulenga, 2019). Reicher et al., (2005) speaking about leadership as a form of social identity, assert that leaders and followers are partners, as opposed to the zero-sum view where leadership may be exercised at the expense of the followers or followers at the expense of the leader. Additionally, leader-follower relationships ought to enhance respect for public and institutional relations as the primary domain of service, when considering institutional policies for professional skills development and advancement. Such determinations will have an impact on followers' attitudes and motivations as well as performance in any field of engagement (Njageh, 2015).

Recognition of ethical leadership has been proposed as important in changing leadership quality in the context of Africa, as it promotes delegation of responsibility, resolution of conflict and interaction with followers (Dei et al., 2016). Identification of gaps and needs in leadership styles go a long way in advancing theory and practice, as Breevaart et al., (2014) assert that need fulfillment and transformational leaders motivate their followers. Such leaders enable their followers "to transcend their self-interest" by being sensitive to the needs of their followers to focus on the common good by looking at their problems from different angles (p.194-195). Providing a voice for involvement of followers as an integral part of their professional development is therefore not only the right thing to do, but also supports desired outcomes for congregations and their practice settings.

This background provides a basis for practice evaluation and the objective of this report to examine points of convergence or departure in the incorporation of the outcomes of professional skills development from an 'eagles eye' represented by the leaders' lenses. This may provide integral benefit to merge theory and practice for best practices when all circumstances are considered.

Methods

This was a second-tier pilot study which utilized a quantitative research methodology, cross-sectional survey design where data was collected at one point in time (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The sampling method used was purposive (Patten & Newhart, 2018) and convenience sampling methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) from the list serve of the sponsoring institution database.

Participants

Participants were recruited from the sponsoring agency's master list of Leaders in ten countries of Africa south of the Sahara, which include Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Nigeria, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. A total of 337 Leaders with valid email contacts were identified and contacted through emails. The study was conducted for a period of approximately six weeks via online survey hosted on Qualtrics.com. A response rate of 39.76% was obtained in this study ($N=134$).

This sample size was adequate for conducting the necessary tests for the purpose of checking the internal consistency and reliability of the survey instrument. This study attracted a higher number of participants compared to the first pilot group of ($N= 22$).

Results of the second-tier pilot study

The survey was closed at time the when it was determined that the online survey collector, Qualtrics.com was inactive for an extended period after one month. There was no survey that had been started and/or not completed by the time of the closure.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for all scales.

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
SLDI effect- IV	83	-1	2	1.06	.631
SLDI sufficiency-IV	77	3	12	10.43	1.712
Self-efficacy DV1	101	18	40	32.61	4.521
Latent potential DV2	70	6	23	15.36	3.592
Valid N (listwise)	48				

Note: Scores from the independent and dependent variables.

This was the second-tier measure for the study tool reliability and internal consistency for the researcher designed questions alongside an existing tool, GSE. A Cronbach's alpha in the range of 0.70 to 0.90 is recommended for a data collection instrument to be reliable and valid for internal consistency. The GSE scale is predetermined at .76 - .90 (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). In this study the rating for the new scales was adapted to match the self-efficacy scoring which has been tested reliability and internal consistency. The table below shows the Cronbach's alpha obtained from participants in this study.

Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha Test of reliability.

Scale	No. of items	Cronbach's Alpha
SLDI training IV	3	.873
Latent potential for sustainable leadership development - DV	6	.843
Self-efficacy DV	10	.826

Note: Major Superiors survey $N = 134$. The recommended Alpha is between $\alpha = 0.70 - 0.90$

Data from this study reveals that the scales pass the test for validity as the Cronbach's Alpha is greater than .70. Therefore, this step validates the research tool for internal consistency and reliability.

Supplemental analyses

The following section was intended to determine if participants would have trouble understanding the question or if there were any that needed revision. Participants did not provide additional questions or suggestions for change. The study guiding questions outlined in Table 1, and results are presented as follows.

SLDI competencies before and after the training

1. How would you rate your members competency before and after SLDI training?

The scale for SLDI self-rating competencies was computed and coded into three equal categories (0 - .99 low scores 1 - 1.99, moderated and 2 - 3 as high competencies). A paired samples t-test was conducted to test for the Leaders' perception of the effect of the SLDI training for their members before and after the training. There was a statistically significant difference found before the training ($M = 1.57, SD = .609$) and after the training ($M = 2.63, SD = .487$), ($t(82) = -15.296, p < .001$). A Cohen's d was calculated where a very large effect size was found $d = 1.680$, which suggests that non-traditional leadership training, the SLDI model is considered highly effective by the leaders.

Ten percent of superiors rated their members as possessing low competencies after the SLDI training, 69% leaders classified their members as possessing moderate competencies and 21% leaders rated their members as possessing high competencies. The mean score of the group from the SLDI Effect scale was ($M = 1.06$) which falls within the high scores' range/category. This was predetermined between -1 and +2. [-1 - 0 low scores, 0.01 -0.99 moderate and 1 - 2 high competencies].

2. How Sufficient are the courses your members completed in the SLDI training?

For the SLDI sufficiency rating, which was an accompanying variable to the independent variable, 7% of leaders rated the sufficiency of SLDI as moderate while 93% rated the model as highly sufficient. The group mean was 10.43 which was within the upper limit for high scores for sufficiency of the training.

Latent potential analysis

3. What are the scores of latent potential for sustainable leadership skills development?

To respond to this section, the leaders were guided by the following questions. On one section they responded to the question. *Do members in your congregation receive training in the following disciplines at the Formation training or at a College/University, Canon law, Theology, Philosophy, Church History, Sacred Scripture and the Magisterium?* The second section they responded to the question. *In your opinion how competent are members of your congregation to use their knowledge in these disciplines?*

The scores and test for the latent potential for sustainable leadership skills development scale were as follows; the number of participants who responded to this question were $n = 70$ valid cases. The group mean was 15.38 thus moderate competencies, the mode was 15, the minimum score was 6 points and the highest score was 23 points (see Table 2). The scale was coded into three categories [6 – 12 low competencies, 13 – 18 moderate competencies and 19 – 24 high competencies].

An independent t -test was conducted to examine group differences between the views of leaders from pontifical right and diocesan right institutes. The outcome for leaders from pontifical right institutes was higher ($M = 16.17$, $SD = 3.79$) compared to that of leaders from diocesan right institutes ($M = 14.76$, $SD = 3.33$). However, there was no statistically significant difference found between the two groups ($t(55) = 1.407$, $p > .05$). This result suggests that all leaders have similar views and rate their followers with moderate competencies in latent potential for sustainable leadership development.

Self-efficacy analysis

4. What are the scores of self-efficacy from the GSE scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995)?

Considering that the questions for self-efficacy can only be articulated by the individual, the leaders rated themselves on the ten questions of GSE scale for self-efficacy. The valid number of respondents for this section was $n = 98$ participants. The minimum score was 22 points and the maximum score was 40 points. The mean of the group was 32.70, with a standard deviation of 4.31, the mode was 35 points. The scale was coded into three different categories where [10 – 20 low self-efficacy, 21 – 30 moderate self-efficacy, 31 – 40 high self-efficacy]. This test was conducted to test the theory of Bandura (1977) that people are capable of organizing themselves to attain desired goals, through four sources of information, past experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion and emotional states.

An independent t -test was conducted to examine group differences between the rating for own self-efficacy among leaders from pontifical right and diocesan right institutes. The outcome reveals

a statistically significant difference between the two groups. Leaders from diocesan right institutes had a higher perceived self-efficacy ($M = 34.50$, $SD = 4.06$) compared to that of leaders from pontifical right institutes ($M = 31.91$, $SD = 4.23$) ($t(84) = -2.745$, $p < .01$). There was a moderate effect size Cohen's $d = 0.621$. This result could be explored further in a separate study to determine the factors that influence the high self-efficacy among diocesan right institutes compared to leaders from pontifical right institutes.

What is the relationship between the IV and DVs?

Table 3. Test of relationships between variables.

Correlations		SLDI effect	SLDI sufficiency	Self-efficacy scale	LP Scale
SLDI effect	Pearson Correlation	1	.002	-.181	-.091
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.987	.120	.513
	N	83	70	75	54
SLDI sufficiency	Pearson Correlation	.002	1	.123	.074
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.987		.314	.615
	N	70	77	69	49
Self-efficacy scale	Pearson Correlation	-.181	.123	1	.132
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.120	.314		.283
	N	75	69	101	68
LP Scale	Pearson Correlation	-.091	.074	.132	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.513	.615	.283	
	N	54	49	68	70

Note: What is the relationship between the independent and dependent variables?

The perspective of Leaders' evaluation as shown in this correlation coefficient test reveals negative and near to zero/no relationship between the variables coded in different scales. SLDI Effect [IV] and SLDI sufficiency [IV] ($r(68) = .002$, $p > .05$). The next correlation was for SLDI Effect [IV] and self-efficacy [DV1] ($r(73) = -.181$, $p > .05$). SLDI Effect and latent potential for sustainable leadership skills development [DV2] ($r(52) = -.091$, $p > .05$). Leaders' evaluation of their followers using SLDI sufficiency [IV] and self-efficacy [DV1] ($r(67) = .123$, $p > .05$). SLDI sufficiency and latent potential for sustainable leadership skills development for their followers reveals no relationship, ($r(47) = .074$, $p > .05$). All the variables did not have a relationship in this study.

This outcome was accompanied by further inquiry on how leaders rate the identified courses that were selected to measure the level of latent potential for sustainable leadership skills development for members in congregations. The following is a comparison of the level at which congregations prepare their members in traditional leadership courses.

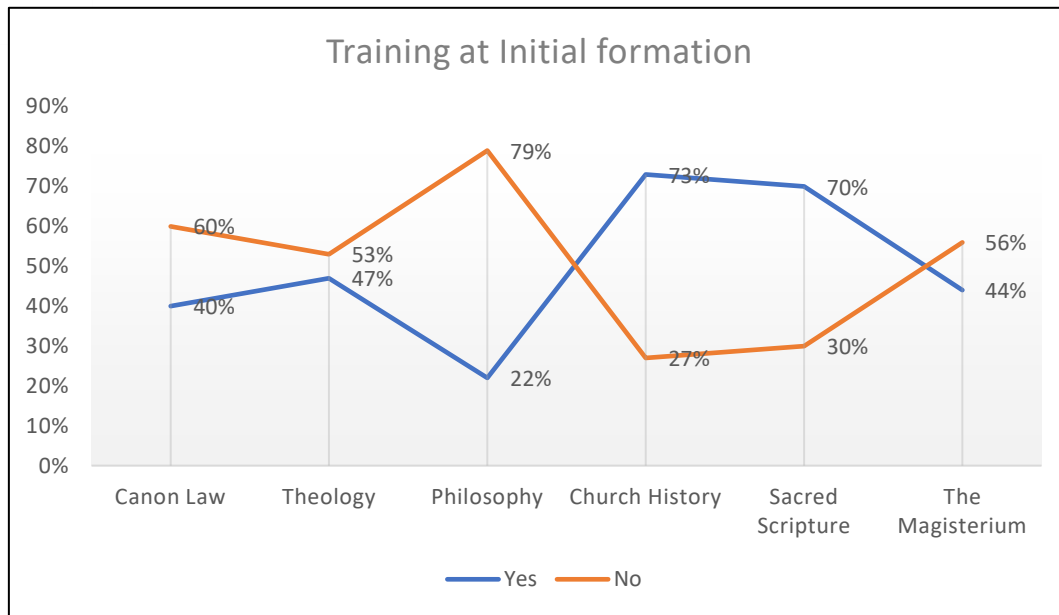


Figure 1. Do members of your congregation receive training in the following disciplines?

Leaders' responses to the question on latent potential within their institutes reveal that four out of the six courses (67%) scored poorly in traditional training with as low scores 27% for those who have received training in their formation training. While a great majority have received training in some courses more than others, close to three in ten do not receive training in Church history (27%) and Sacred Scripture (30%), which are baseline courses in traditional training.

This outcome when compared to the leaders' responses on how they prepare followers with traditional skills training at colleges/university level of education, the situation declined. In all courses identified, more than half of followers in the institutes do not pursue traditional courses the least being 52% in Theology and highest 79% in the Magisterium. Additionally, the rest of the courses had similar ratings - Canon law, Philosophy, Church History, and Sacred Scripture were not prioritized at college/universities. Figure 2 below presents these results.

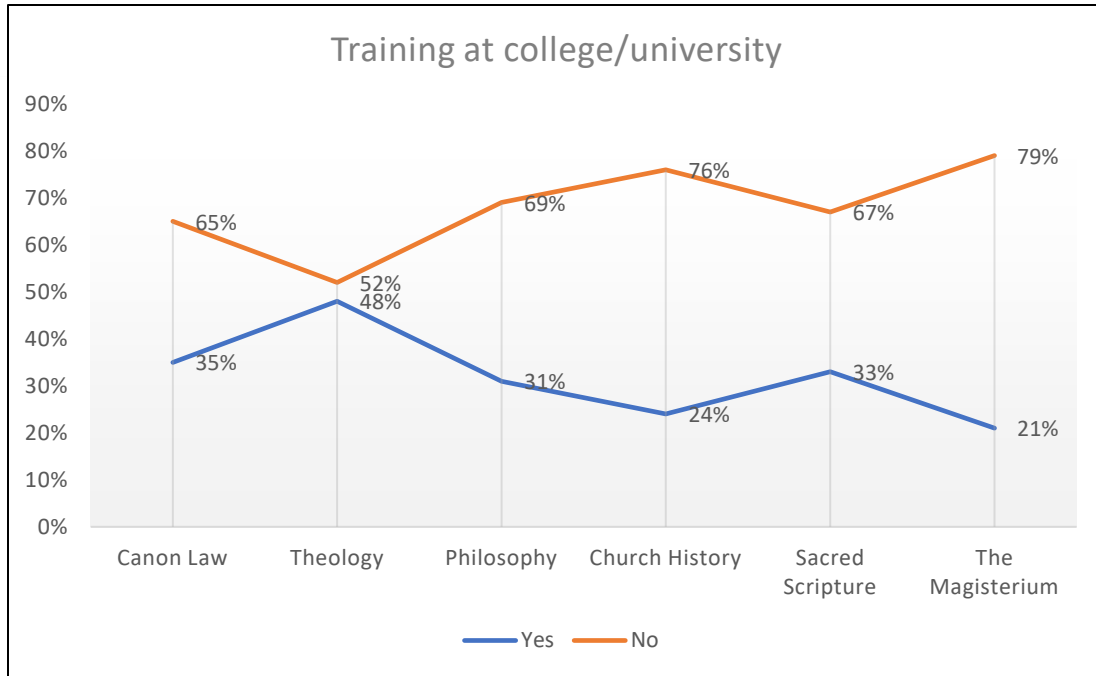


Figure 2. Do members in your congregation receive training in the following disciplines?

The next question was related to how leaders evaluate the competencies of their followers. Leaders found their followers to be highly competent in spite of reporting low numbers among those who are trained in traditional courses where followers have better opportunities at the Formation House training than in college/university. There is a relational trend in the level of competencies intertwined as identified by the leaders in the high numbers of their followers trained at the formation house. However, it is not easy to tell if the high competencies as perceived by leaders is as a result of training at the formation, or from the few who have trained at the college/university level.

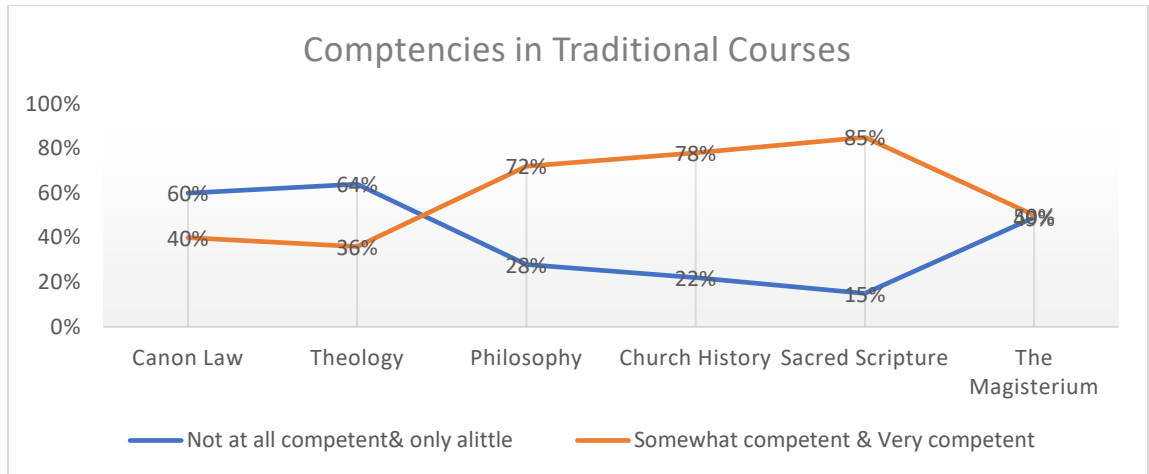


Figure 3. In your opinion how competent are members of your congregation to use their knowledge in the following disciplines?

Participation in Superiors' workshops

The leaders in this study were asked to indicate if they have participated in superiors' workshops with the sponsoring agency themselves and their respective countries of training. For those who have participated, they named their country of participation and those who did not participate indicated the number zero for no participation. Approximately 50% of Leaders have not participated ($n = 54$) while the other half ($n = 53$) have participated in superiors' workshops.

Measure of attitudes and opinions

Lastly the leaders were asked about their opinion on suggested areas for improving the situation of followers in their congregations. The following is the outcome of the measurement for opinions and attitudes, comparing the combined scores for those who *strongly disagree/somewhat disagree* to scores of those who *somewhat agree/strongly agree* outcome.

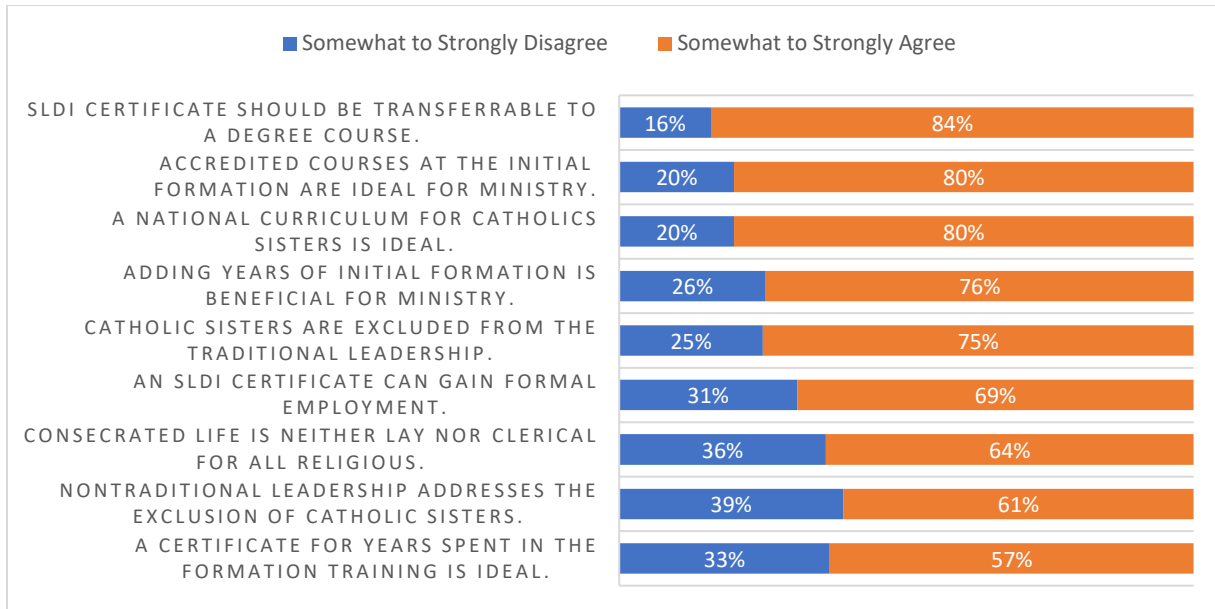


Figure 4. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? There is no right or wrong answer.

Eight in ten (84%) of leaders somewhat agree or strongly agree that *the nontraditional leadership training certificate ought to be transferrable to a degree*, followed by a similar statistic from those leaders who somewhat agree or strongly agree that accredited courses together with a national curriculum for followers formation training are necessary. All nine categories attracted strong ratings from the leaders with the lowest rating being 57%, of leaders who somewhat or strongly agree that *institutes of religious life could offer a certificate to account for the years spent at the initial formation for their followers*. This helps in the event that followers' discernment process leads to a change of mind and they discontinue the path to religious life. Fear of departures from religious life has been cited as a major threat to educating young religious (Niba, 2019; Njageh, 2015).

However, one study cites a visionary founder of a congregation who argues in favor on empowering the young women even if they were to depart from religious life, because they would go out as better citizens (Nakitende, 2015). Nakitende echoes the words of Hahn 1990, who advances that "we need policy makers who respect the public's intelligence and are willing to engage in mutual learning" (p. 213). If after due process of discernment individuals decide this way of life is not for them or they are advised to leave, empowerment policies ought to recognize that disagreement is a normal element in diverse populations (Nakitende, 2015). The benefits of empowering young women with professional skills outweigh the loss of members departing the congregations if an individual decides to leave after getting an education (Niba, 2019; Njageh, 2015). There are many highly educated members within the same congregations, high profile

professionals, who have understood their calling and happily continue to serve the Church, their congregations and the global community.

Other benefits suggested in this study are, the provision of a certificate after initial formation training supported by 57% of participants to facilitate in the application and job placement processes. This is necessary when followers have to rejoin the government agencies or other employers who may require completion of paperwork to show professional development and qualifications obtained. Lastly the leaders had more than 30 categories of areas they mentioned as a priority. However, the most frequently mentioned were Leadership and management mentioned 26 times. Counseling and Psychology and Project planning and management were both cited 20 times. Canon Law/civil law and Finance were cited 17 times, Theology was mentioned 12 times and Communication skills 11 times. All other categories had less than 10 mentions as priority areas.

Discussion

In most parts of Africa, “the cultural context allows for high power-distance, which affects the relationship between leaders and followers” (Adewale, 2019, p.758). Moreover, in the context of religious life compared to other situations of life where people choose at liberty their career path, career path decisions for some women religious largely dependent on their superiors (Njageh, 2015). Njageh postulates that the inability of followers to make a significant decision in career choice, negatively impacts “job performance and motivation whether intrinsically or extrinsically for new or established professionals” (p.129). Such power differentials can inhibit progress and performance in organizations. Adewale’s study proposes virtuous leadership as a means to navigate the challenge of power differential and performance among followers. Virtues such as “truthfulness, humility, courage and humanity all go a long way in enhancing a positive impact on followers” (p.759). Religious Congregations strive to ensure that the charism and needs of the society guide the decision for members to pursue one career or another (Niba, 2019, Njageh 2015). The challenge however is that often the experiences of followers points to a perceived waste of human and financial resources as one participants responds to a survey “ It has always been hard as I tried to explain myself though we dialogue, the end result is to obey my superior” and another participant added, the superior’s decision is the last (Njageh, 2015 p.136). Njageh (2015) highlights human development aspects like enhancing “confidence in performance, responsibility, motivation, having the right mindset and the right attitude towards work” as important for every ministry (p.137).

The great awakening found in this study relates to the poor outcomes associated with high latent potential for sustainable leadership skills development among participants. In leadership models, similarities have been shown to illustrate relational outcomes between leaders and followers, based on aspects such as gender, race, age, mutual trust among others (Johnson et al., 2017). The understanding of leaders on their followers in this study is based on their shared background in religious life. The ratings in traditional competencies was a lower outcome compared to the high rating they accorded their followers in the non-traditional leadership training competencies.

Majority of leaders' scores for their followers revealed a change difference of more than ten times in skills before the training, 6% compared to 61% after the training for those followers they rated with a high score. The change in low scores was also large where skills prior to the training were rated at 49% but after the training only 1% of leaders still rated the competencies of their followers as low. This result suggests a higher appreciation for the outcomes of nontraditional leadership training more than the traditional leadership training.

Leaders have a high confidence in the competencies of their followers. This outcome aligns to findings from other studies which have advanced that the humility of leaders is seen as an asset in impacting followers' self-expansion, self-efficacy and performance (Mao, et al., 2019). This is attainable with the ability of leaders to make honest evaluations of their followers, not as a condemnation but "an interpersonal characteristic rooted in self-transcendence, the ability to view oneself accurately appreciating others' strengths and contributions, enabling openness to new insights" (p.343). The high ratings for the opinions and attitudes items on the survey, indicate an awakening pointing to the new direction leaders might want to consider for their congregations in the course of time.

The rating of 75% of leaders concur that women religious are systematically excluded from the traditional leadership right from the beginnings of their formation characterized by the difference in the syllabi of training. Studies show that "individuals' social identity is a part of their self-concept, which derives from their perceived membership in a relevant social group" (Chen et al., 2017). The exclusion from traditional leadership does not only account for social but religious identity for women religious particularly in baseline courses fundamental for faith formation and deeper understanding of the Catholic teachings. Circumstances when members feel excluded and not a part of the whole, could be a source of antagonism or poor psychological states among members in organizations. Chen et al, advances that "social identity, team identification and organization identification are great goods for congruence and support for the larger organization" (p.3). The leaders in this study have provided a strong voice in all the nine suggested areas where they find their organizations/institutions and practice settings can improve. All the nine areas obtained more than half of participants approval ratings for change, from the combined scores of *agree to strongly agree* (see figure 4).

Limitations of the study

The survey was quantitative research methodology and did not allow for further exploration of participants views as would be the case in a mixed or qualitative research methodology. It is not easy to rate with accuracy matters of competencies on behalf of someone who is not part of the process, particularly on unstandardized scores. Self-reported scores are subject to change over time and under different circumstances, similar to personal motivations experience and exposure as exemplified in the theory of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). As noted in this study congregational leaders have the last word on decisions made regarding their followers. Some of the decisions are seen as counterproductive and inconsistent when stakeholders are excluded in the decision-making processes (Mulenga, 2019; Njageh, 2015). The outcome of this study will be compared with the

outcome of non-SLDI participants and the main study sampling the alum and the new cohort in the program, to determine the differences and similarities.

Conclusion

The primary goal was to measure the internal consistency and reliability of this instrument. The Cronbach's Alpha affirmed the outcome of the first pilot study with non-SLDI members, where all the scales obtained an alpha greater than 0.80 in both studies. Other outcomes of the study that were examined as supplemental analysis provide a basis for comparison of the outcomes of the three pieces of data collected from the first pilot study, second-tier pilot study and the main research to inform practice. All participants share a common way of life as women religious, have different levels of education and professional skills and diverse career paths. However, a weak base recruitment, lack of consistent policies for education and professional development as well as the exclusion of stakeholders negatively impact performance and motivation at work. All participants affirm a strong rating for the need to review all identified areas of change and development within their congregational structures and administration. These include procedures at recruitment to religious life and post initial formation training, education policies, to the transition into professional skills development either at higher institutions of learning or tertiary colleges.

Recommendations for future research

Further studies could explore a participatory action research involving leaders and followers to determine the nature of dialogical models that could enhance leader-follower relationships while supporting the heritage and charism of the congregations. Congregations are governed by a spirituality, charisms and a recognized rule alongside a vowed way of life where the mastery of obedience is found to inform and make manifest the witness of religious life.

Some studies show there are some unintended outcomes of professional development and higher education, that sometimes the selection criteria can hurt interpersonal relationship within communities (Nakitende, 2015; Njageh, 2015). Some divisions are experienced among members, between those who get the opportunities to get an education and those who do not proceed to higher education. A recommendation is made to compare performance of congregations with and those without policies in place to examine the impact on job satisfaction, mindset and performance of members.

Based on the repeated mention of the problem of inconsistencies in policy formulations and lack thereof in some congregations, future research could explore the relationship between professional development and congregational charisms in relation to their growth or decline.

About the Author

Sr. Kevin Karimi is a member of the Little Sisters of St. Francis from Kenya. A graduate of Marywood University, MSW - 2017 and a PhD in Strategic Leadership and Administrative Studies - 2020. Earned BA in Sociology, Philosophy & Religious Studies and an MA in Philosophy from the University of Nairobi - Kenya. Her Study interests are in Advocacy and Women Religious in Africa south of the Sahara. Currently A Research Assistant at the African Sisters Education Collaborative – Marywood University in Scranton, PA.



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