

Understanding Systemic Exclusion Through Nontraditional Leadership

Sr. Kevin Karimi, Ph.D.

Marywood University

Contact information kevin.keikei@gmail.com or kevin.karimi@asec-sldi.org

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Abstract

This pilot study was conducted to test the survey instrument for internal consistency and validity. It was necessitated by a combination of an existing tool the General Self Efficacy (GSE) and a researcher designed survey. The tool was utilized in a study which sought to examine the impact of nontraditional leadership training – Sisters Leadership Development Initiative (SLDI), on participants self-efficacy and latent potential for sustainable leadership skills development. The research design was quantitative, cross-sectional survey with a sample size of 30 non-SLDI participants. The study obtained a 73% response rate ($N=22$) and the scales produced an adequate Alpha for internal consistency and reliability. All the three items obtained more than the minimum recommended Cronbach's Alpha of between the $\alpha = .70$ to $.90$. For supplemental analysis Pearson's r and multiple regressions revealed no relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Participants had high self-efficacy and high latent potential for sustainable leadership skills development, but no relationship was found between two variables. The outcomes of this study are envisioned to be correlated with the second-tier pilot testing with congregational leaders' perspective on nontraditional leadership training. Lastly, compare the outcomes of the main study to derive implications for practice.

Keywords: Nontraditional leadership, traditional leadership, self-efficacy, latent potential.

Introduction

In Africa south of the Sahara about 80% of Catholic Sisters have been found to lack academic credentials and professional skills to enable them to become more effective in their ministries (Wakahiu, 2013; Wakahiu & Shaver, 2015). The African Sisters Education Collaborative set up a nontraditional leadership training for women religious in Africa south of the Sahara. The goal was to find an intervention to break the cycle of lack of professional and academic credentials among women religious. The need to provide an up-to-date credentials is a recommendation that goes back to Vatican II Council when the Church made major structural and systemic changes (Gaunt, 2018). However, changes within religious women congregations has not been achieved fully, neither by congregations of women religious nor across their countries. Women religious in some countries have done better than others in providing professional skills development, changing their historical narrative (Mulderry, 2017). This has provided a benchmark for women religious particularly from the global North to the global South (Wakahiu, 2019). Pope Francis has offered a praiseworthy and plausible approach to reversing the exclusion of women religious and the lay in the Church leadership by appointing qualified women leaders to major pontifical councils (McElwee, 2019). In his response to the call, Pope Francis invites major superiors to help in this, because they are vested with the mandate to appoint sisters to various ministries. Major superiors can help make the reality of service as opposed to servitude happen in the work of Catholic Sisters, 'not maids,' the Pontiff emphasized (Glatz, 2019).

The main study seeks to answer the question "What is the impact of non-traditional leadership training on Catholic Sisters' self-efficacy and latent potential for sustainable leadership skills development?" It was hypothesized that there would be no relationship between the nontraditional leadership training and the two dependent variables. The need to provide these skills led to the development of a nontraditional leadership skills training in ten countries of Africa south of the Sahara since the year 2007 (Wakahiu, 2013). The program runs in Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Nigeria, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

Qualitative studies on SLDI reveal that the training and mentorship improves professional skills and performance among participants from the nontraditional leadership training (SLDI Evaluation report, 2018; Wakahiu & Keller, 2011). However, no quantitative study has been conducted to test the impact of the program on leadership and professional skills development, necessitating this current study. This is to determine efforts being made for the much-required professional skills to match the increasing socio-economic needs in Africa south of the Sahara in the rapidly changing times.

The need to provide Catholic Sisters with up to date credentials and professional development has been recommended since the second Vatican Council first by Pope Pius XII (Gaunt, 2018). Subsequently, other Popes, including John XXIII, (*Mater et Magistra*, 1961) John Paul II (*Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, 1990) appealed to the wealthy nations to support poor nations with provision of quality education as a step toward alleviation of poverty and ignorance in the global community. Catholic sisters from the global North now share from their own situation and experience with the

Catholic Sisters from the global South, informed by structures and curriculums formulated to address their lack of credentials for ministry (Mulderry, 2017). Moreover, Catholic Sisters recognize the need to do more to provide quality service in their ministries (Wakahiu, Gichure & Njage, 2015). Lessons have been learned from the yesteryears and rapidly changing context, when women religious heavily depended on learning on the job and mentorship from the more qualified practitioners, to pursuing an education (Johnson et al., 2019; Wakahiu, et al., 2015).

Methods

This pilot study employed a cross-sectional survey design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This method allows for data to be collected over a short period of time and was chosen due to the precipitous and convenience in saving time and associated costs, compared to a longitudinal survey design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Considering that this was a pilot phase to test the survey instrument, the design was found to be a good fit to inform more than one aspect of data collection. For instance, participants are in multiple countries of Africa south of the Sahara, and the amount of time they would require to complete the survey was considered. Their understanding of questions and management of the online survey were all important aspects to measure. The design also allows for descriptive analysis of data, measuring opinions and attitudes of a population using a sample of that population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Sample size

A group of 30 Catholic Sisters from Africa south of the Sahara were identified through purposive sampling method to ensure that they had not trained in SLDI by the time of this study (Patten & Newhart, 2018). The list serve of the sponsoring agency was utilized to select the country Directors and Coordinators from the ten countries. The other ten sisters were identified through the telephone address book of the researcher. They were purposefully selected to ensure they did not have a background in the SLDI training under scrutiny and would not be included in the main study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Patten & Newhart 2018). A total of 22 participants responded to the survey providing a 73% response rate in this pilot phase. Respondents were from eight out of ten countries where ASEC serves. Their demographic information included age, level of education, congregation type, vows, and current occupation.

Instruments and the process

The survey instrument comprised 50 questions administered online via Qaultrics.com. These were divided into three sections:

Part I, the GSE scale with ten questions (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). This scale has been operationalized in this study to show three levels of self-efficacy derived from the overall scores of 10 – 40. Scores of 10 – 20 indicates low self-efficacy, 21 – 30 moderate self-efficacy and 31 – 40 high self-efficacy.

Part II comprised of 21 questions seeking to measure various aspects of latent potential for sustainable leadership skills development derived from traditional courses found in (Can, 250, 252§3). The main courses selected to measure latent potential are six canonical courses, Canon law, Theology, Philosophy, Church History, Sacred Scripture and the Magisterium. According to the canonical provisions made above, all candidates trained in these courses, as it pertains to the formation of the clergy, complete after a minimum of six full years. This traditional training is different from what women religious receive at their formation training. However, it is compared to other aspects of women religious life formation, like their adoption of nontraditional leadership training to meet their lack of credentials. High competency scores in these six categories would mean low latent potential and low scores would mean high latent potential. They are operationalized in three categories derived from the minimum to maximum scores 6 – 24. Scores of 6 – 12 indicates high latent potential, 13 – 18 moderate latent potential and 19 – 24 low latent potential. Other items measured opinions and attitudes of participants in areas requiring a review, such as accreditation, curriculum, policies, national programs for religious life formation, among others.

Part III comprised of 19 demographic items associated with the independent variable (SLDI training) and participants personal data, including but not limited to age, level of education, congregation status, vows, occupation and recommendations for improvement of SLDI. The nontraditional leadership training under scrutiny is a one-month long training spread out in three years, specializing in three tracks of leadership skills development. Basic Technology – year one, then participants proceed to choose either Administration specialization in year two and three or Finance specialization year two and three after which they graduate.

The SLDI scale was coded using the three tracks offered where the scores range from 3 – 12 where (3 – 5 low skills, 6 – 9 moderate and 10 – 12 high). For the SLDI competencies the range was between minus 1 and 2, derived from the difference between the self-reported scores participants obtain before and after completing SLDI training. This would mean a score of -1 – 0 would be low competencies, 0.01 – 0.99 would mean moderate competencies and 1 – 2 would mean high competencies. Coding of these scales served two purposes, testing the internal consistency and validity of the research instrument. The second purpose was to facilitate the testing for the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variables to answer the research question in the main study. Other demographic data was used to determine the possible influence they might have on the outcomes of the study as independent variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Inferential questions were an additional section in the survey that tested the opinions and attitudes of participant from their lived experience. They responded to a set of nine questions to measure either *strongly disagree*, *somewhat disagree* on the negative side, or *somewhat agree*, *to strongly agree* on the positive side. This section intended to facilitate a better understanding in deriving points for reference in formulating recommendations and points of implications for practice.

Results

The survey was conducted over a period of one week. The response rate was 73% ($N = 22$). The outcome for the test of the Cronbach's Alpha obtained above $\alpha > 0.80$ for all the scales in the study (see Table 1 below). Additionally, review of a professional expert was sought in designing the researcher designed questions (see Appendix I), which maintained the same scoring as the GSE scale 1 – 4. A choice of 1 being low and 4 high.

Test of Reliability and internal consistency for the scales

Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha for non-SLDI participants.

Scale	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
SLDI Training (IV)	3	0.818
Self-efficacy (DV1)	10	0.838
Latent potential for sustainable.... (DV2)	6	0.827

Note: Pilot study one $N = 22$. Recommended Alpha range ($\alpha = .70$ and $.90$)

This outcome was compared with the second-tier pilot test conducted with congregational leaders, where the survey instrument yielded similar scores, consistent with the non-SLDI participants. The second-tier test for internal consistency and validity obtained a higher Alpha with more participants than the first one. The table below shows the outcome.

Table 2. Second test for Cronbach's Alpha with Major superiors.

Scale	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
SLDI Training (IV)	3	0.873
Self-efficacy (DV1)	10	0.826
Latent potential for sustainable.... (DV2)	6	0.843

Note: Second-Tier pilot study $N = 134$. Recommended Alpha range ($\alpha = .70$ and $.90$)

From this outcome the instrument was considered a good fit for the study. Participants from the two groups did not provide additional comments or questions regarding the formulation of the questions. There was no indication that they did not understand the questions, therefore the survey

was adapted for the main study as is in these pilot studies. The rest of the analysis in this paper concern the data from non-SLDI participants only.

Supplemental analysis for this study

Descriptive statistics reveal a very high score for self-efficacy with all participants obtaining a group mean of 33.00 points with a SD. 4.19. The test for latent potential for sustainable leadership skills development reveal a high latent potential from the group mean of 12.31 points with a standard deviation of 3.55. and moderate scores for SLDI effect questions.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for the three scales

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Self-Efficacy scale	33.00	4.190	19
LPS Scale	12.31	3.545	13
SLDI Effect	1.10	.316	10

Note: What are the scores for self-efficacy, latent potential and SLDI training?

A Pearson correlation test for relationship however reveals no relationship between the independent and the two dependent variables. There was no relationship between the two dependent variables as well. Pearson correlations for SLDI Effect and self-efficacy ($r(8) = .218, p > .05$); SLDI effect and latent potential had a negative relationship ($r(5) = -.171, p > .05$) self-efficacy and latent potential ($r(11) = .206, p > .05$). This informs the formulation of a null hypothesis for the main study to determine the nature of relationship with actual participants of the study in addition to the central question. The table below illustrates this outcomes.

Table 4. Test of Relationships between variables.

Correlations

		Self-Efficacy scale	LPS Scale	SLDI Effect
Self-Efficacy scale	Pearson Correlation	1	.206	.218
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.500	.546
	N	19	13	10
LPS Scale	Pearson Correlation	.206	1	-.171
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.500		.714
	N	13	13	7
SLDI Effect	Pearson Correlation	.218	-.171	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.546	.714	
	N	10	7	10

Note: No relationship is found between the independent and dependent variables.

An additional test for relationships utilized the multiple linear regression to establish if there were any additional significant predictor variables from the moderating variables in this study. These were identified as, congregation type [pontifical right/diocesan right], highest level of education, age category, SLDI effect, self-efficacy, and latent potential for sustainable leadership skills development.

When self-efficacy was computed as the dependent variable, the ANOVAS did not show any significance, $R^2 = .943$, $R^2_{adj} = .828$, ($F(4, 2) = 8.245$, $p = .111$). This model accounts for 82.8% of variance, meaning 17.2% is explained by other variables/factors not captured in this study. Similarly, no significance was found in the model for latent potential for sustainable leadership skills development from the same moderating variables, $R^2 = .924$, $R^2_{adj} = .772$, ($F(4, 2) = 6.074$, $p = .146$). This model accounts for 77.2% of variance, meaning 22.8% is explained by other variables/factors not captured in this study. This outcome corresponds to the Pearson r , where no relationship was found between the independent and the two dependent variables.

A follow up section examining the latent potential for sustainable leadership skills development was measured from another perspective. Participants were asked to respond if they had received training in the identified six courses from the traditional training (Can. 250; 252 §3). They were required to indicate if they trained at the formation house for religious life training or at a college/university level. The Figure below presents the outcome from the respondents with a steep slope between the two contexts.

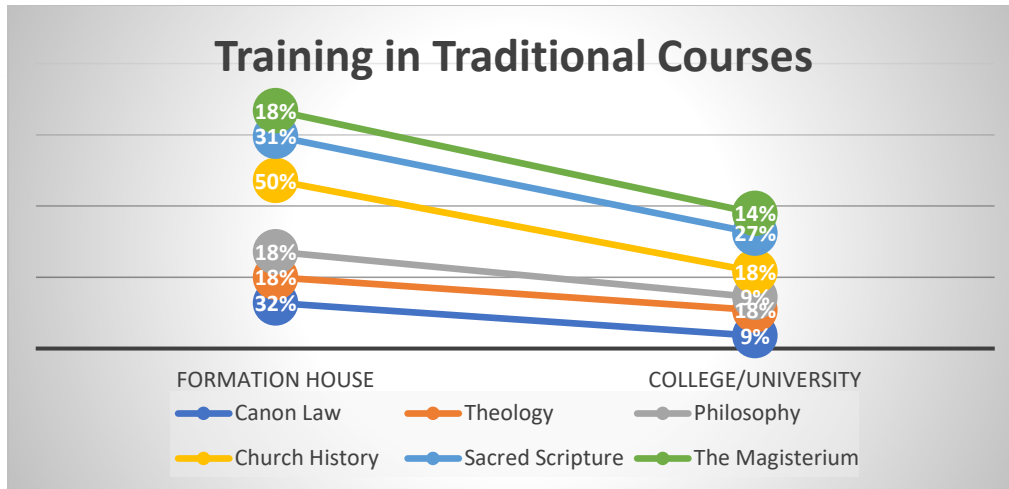


Figure 1. If you have, where did you receive training in these courses?

Participants report receiving training at both the initial formation and college/university training. However, in all categories, with the exception Church History where participants reveal they have received training at 50% in the formation house, all other courses show little training. Three in ten participants have received some training at the formation house 32% in Canon law on the higher side, compared to 27% of those in Sacred Scripture who have received training in college/university as the highest number. This outcome is relatable to their self-evaluation on their competencies in traditional courses as illustrated in that Figure below, where up to 80% report being not at all competent or a little competent in canon law, similar to 86% in Philosophy and 75% in the Magisterium.

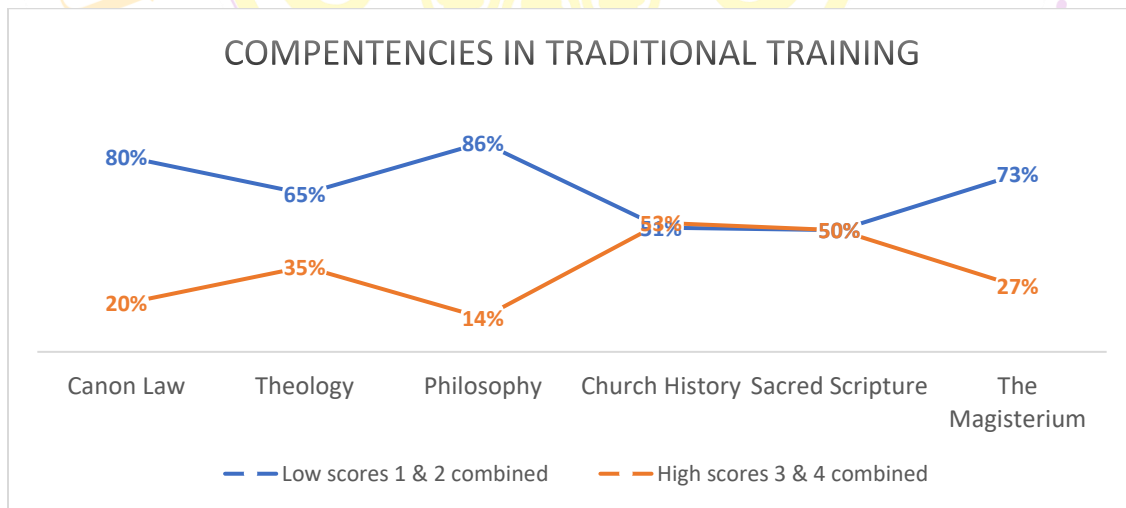


Figure 2. Combined scores for traditional training competencies. Low scores [Not at all competent & only a little competent] and high scores [Somewhat competent & very competent].

Data from this survey reveals a high latent potential among participants in traditional leadership training. In four of the six traditional courses selected, participants have major gaps. Six to eight participants lack competencies in all four disciplines, canon law, theology, philosophy, and the Magisterium. In two courses alone do participants post scores of participants rating themselves at 50% competencies. This outcome is unlike participants experience of high self-efficacy.

Participants' Age

Other variables of interest in this study were considered from participants' demographic information, which was analyzed as follows. Majority of participants in this pilot study were aged 49 years and below. The highest mode was for the age category 50 – 59. Three participants did not provide their age category, one participant was above the age of 70.

Level of education

The demographic data of participants on their highest level of education reveals that respondents were highly educated 81% of those with a bachelor's degree and above, compared to 19% with some college diploma. One participant did not provide the level of education, the rest had some college to master's level of education. The figure below presents the descriptive statistics for the highest level of education attained by respondents.

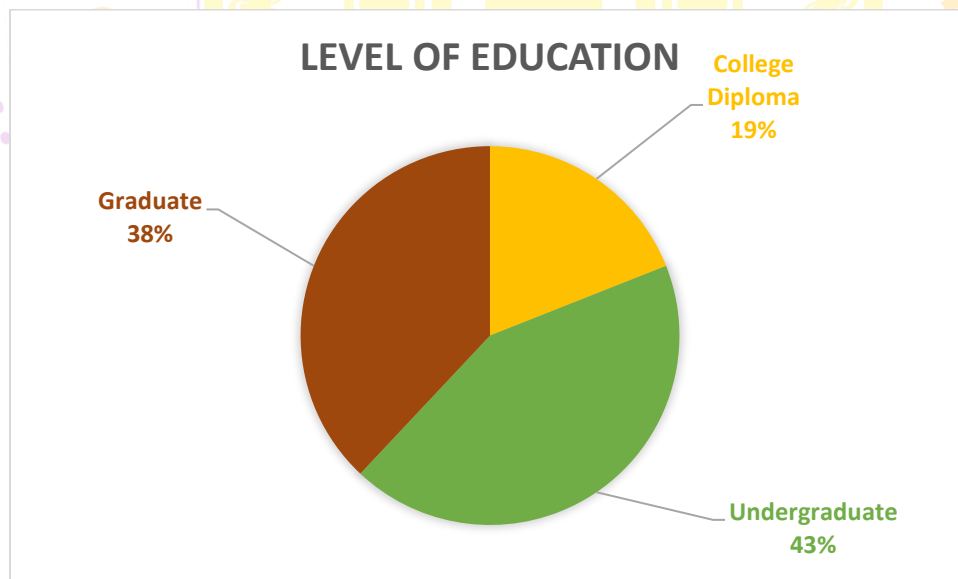


Figure 3. What best describes your highest level of education?

Congregation status and Vows

Participants in this study were from both pontifical right (24%) and diocesan right (76%), one participant did not identify the congregation status. For their vows, all participants in this study professed their perpetual vows by 2019 apart from one who anticipates professing the final vows in 2023. Majority of participants were administrators working as either country directors or country program coordinators constituting 73% of respondents. The remaining participants 27% serve in various capacities such as bursar, farm manager, high school teacher, fashion and interior designer, spiritual director and a student ($n = 6$).

Opinion and attitudes questions

The last section of the survey comprised of a measure of opinions and attitudes intended to examine if participants identified with the identified areas of need for improvement. The outcomes were affirmative as illustrated below.

Table 6. Opinion and attitudes questions.

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? There is no right or wrong answer.	%	%
	Responding “Strongly + Somewhat Disagree”	Responding “Somewhat + Strongly Agree”
1. SLDI certificate should be transferrable to a degree	5	95
2. Catholic sisters are excluded from the traditional leadership of the Church	16	84
3. Accredited courses for Sisters initial formation is necessary for ministry	19	81
4. Consecrated life is neither lay nor clerical for all religious	28	72
5. Congregations could offer a certificate at the end of training to account for the years spent in initial formation	29	72
6. A national curriculum for Catholic sisters’ initial formation training is ideal	30	70
7. Increasing years of Sisters’ initial formation training is beneficial for ministry	30	70
8. Non-traditional leadership training addresses the exclusion of Catholic Sisters	32	69
9. With SLDI certificate one can gain formal employment in our country	45	55

Note: Combined Scores of Strongly Disagree and Disagree, with Agree and Strongly Agree.

Participants in this study recognize some of the factors that could impact them negatively in their religious life as it relates to the nontraditional training. While this group of participants are well educated as indicated in their credentials, they have identified with a strong voice that SLDI training ought to be an accredited course, then it would be transferrable to a degree. Due to the exclusion of Catholic Sisters in traditional leadership, participants also agree that the initial formation ought to be accredited and that adding years of formation would be ideal for ministry. A national curriculum may be a necessary condition to make all these recommendations work for the betterment of skills and professional development (see Table 6).

Three programs to improve SLDI training

All participants contributed to this area of the survey without exception. They identified and suggest an integration of the following skills.

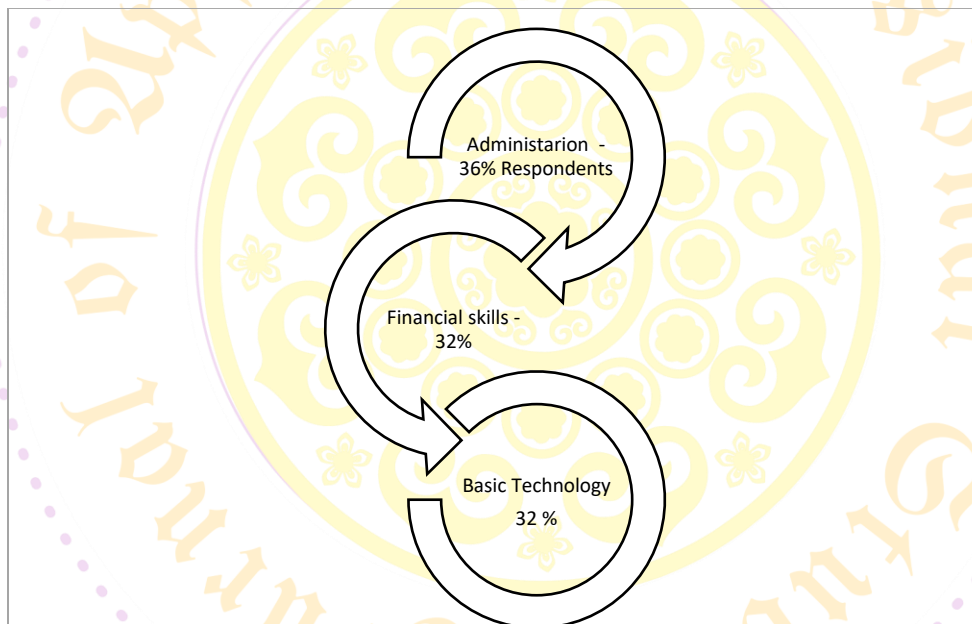


Figure 4. What three programs would you recommend for improving SLDI?

These courses were cited more frequently than others in the three priority recommendations for programs which participants saw as important for their service and to improve SLDI training. Other recommendations identified were, leadership skills, project management and development, grant writing and human resource management.

Discussion

Participants in this pilot survey were highly educated. Even though the sample size was small ($N = 22$), there were more Sisters with higher credentials among those who had obtained a bachelor's degree and master's level of education constituting 81% in this study. This might be a basis for explaining the high level of self-efficacy reported by participants ($n = 19$). Descriptive statistics showed the group mean was very high 33.00, minimum score was 23 points, the median was 34, the mode was 35 and maximum was 40 points. The score for self-efficacy had been predetermined at [10 – 20 low, 21 – 30 moderate and 31 – 40 high self-efficacy].

However, when it came to the second dependent variable latent potential for sustainable leadership skills development, all participants ($n = 13$) had a group mean in the lower score range. The group mean was a score of 12.31. The minimum score was 8 points from two participants, the median was 12.00, mode was 12.00 and one participant had the maximum of 20 points out of the possible 24 maximum. In addition to these low scores, participants are not adequately trained in traditional courses either at the formation house training or at college/university level (see Figure 1).

These outcomes for the dependent variables point to the purpose of the main study to test the theory of Bandura (1977), who theorizes that when people are provided with the necessary conditions, they actualize their potential to attain their goals. Participants in this study have posted high latent potential in traditional leadership training. The theory of self-efficacy will be tested alongside the source of accredited courses deemed necessary to lower the high latent potential among Catholic Sisters derived from traditional courses in (Can 250; 252 §3).

In all areas suggested in the survey that were associated with the intent to decrease the high latent potential found among Catholic Sisters, participants aligned their scores with either *agree* or *strongly agree* to cultivate sustainable leadership skills development. The minimum score of those who *agree* and *strongly agree* was more than half (55%) in one category while the highest score was supported by nine in ten (95%). Participants identified with the need to improve the situation for Catholic Sisters in Africa south of the Sahara, with more than six in ten (69%) and above, somewhat *agree* or *strongly agree* in eight of the nine the suggested questions (see Table 5).

Limitation of the study

This sample of respondents were not trained in SLDI therefore outcomes while informative are limited to the test of reliability of the survey instrument. The outcomes are interpreted sparingly for SLDI. However, for the dependent variables, self-efficacy and latent potential, the outcomes will be compared with the outcome of the main study as they relate to women religious in general. The two dependent variables are validated through their independent sources in research - GSE and the measure for latent potential is based on canonically approved courses. The recommendations provided by participants on programs that could improve SLDI did not add much value because they cited the same programs which are already being offered in the training.

Probably they find empowerment in administration, finance and basic technology as very important for ministry from their practice perspective.

Conclusion

The study found the use of the combined survey tool of the researcher designed questions and the existing scale of self-efficacy was a good fit for the main study after obtaining a Cronbach's Alpha of more than the minimum recommended $r = .74$ (Bandura, 1977) and later recommendation of $r = .76 - .90$ (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). The pilot study obtained greater than an $\alpha > .80$ on all the three scales (see Table 1 above). Participants in this study were not trained in SLDI, therefore it was expected that the SLDI would not necessarily constitute any significant relationship with the two dependent variables. The two dependent variables also did not show any relationship with each other Pearson's r ; $p > .05$. Multiple regressions models did not reveal any significance predictor variables for self-efficacy or latent potential for sustainable leadership skills development.

Recommendations and implication for practice

The outcome of this pilot study supports the purpose of the main study to test the theory of self-efficacy (Bandura 1977). Self-efficacy is one of the dependent variable to determine if there is a relationship or impact from the independent variable, SLDI training. The SLDI training will also be subjected to a second dependent variable to measure the impact on latent potential for sustainable leadership skills development (Can, 250; 252 §3). These two variables will be utilized to test the impact of nontraditional leadership training on a validated tool with internal consistency and reliability. The second recommendation is to test if there is a relationship between the nontraditional leadership training and the traditional leadership training of the Catholic Church.

The control variable in the study will be Catholic Sisters who are a constituted body of the Catholic Church under the Institution of Consecrated Life as women religious (Can. 607 -709). The target of the study population is reinforced by the canonical provision which defines the subjects as neither lay nor clerical thus complicating the nature of systemic exclusion under scrutiny in this study (Can. 588 §1). This applies to all women in general, religious, or not, because those who enter the hierarchy have preliminary steps and a necessary condition that women cannot meet. The condition to be an ordained minister, is for 'male candidates alone' (Can. 1024). The study seeks to add a voice for inclusion by viewing women leadership and contribution as a separate mission to the growth of the Church, if, where and when the Eucharist duties are separated from consultative and advocacy counsel (McElwee, 2019; Mulderry, 2017).

The outcome of this study is envisioned to be compared with the outcome of the second-tier level of pilot testing and the outcomes from the main study to inform practice. The second pilot phase of the survey instrument, was conducted with congregational leaders, also known as Major Superiors. This was intended to test the survey on major superiors' perspective on the nontraditional leadership training. This step was found necessary because major superiors are

responsible for creating leaders and make major decisions regarding Sisters' empowerment (Wakahi et al., 2015). They are also responsible and involved in the selection process of those who enroll in the SLDI training from their congregations. Additionally, they assign members of their congregations to ministries based on how competent they find the Sisters. They also know whom a good fit would be for various ministries within their jurisdiction, or when requested for personnel outside their own congregations where their professional skills and expertise is required.

All these findings constitute a necessary step, which could inform important decisions of improving and understanding nontraditional leadership training for Catholic Sisters in Africa south of the Sahara, as it relates to the needs of the global community. The results may help create a better understanding of the systemic and broad factors associated with the exclusion of Catholic Sisters in traditional leadership of the Catholic Church. The results of this study have found pockets of professional leadership development gaps among Catholic Sisters as it relates to their foundations in religious life formation and training in Africa south of the Sahara. This may be viewed as both a factor and an outcome of the system calling for a review to change the narrative regarding lack of credentials and professional development for these Catholic Sisters.

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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Immaculata Hall, 2300 Adams Avenue, Scranton, PA 18509
 (570) 348-6211, x.2418 or irbhelp@marywood.edu



**PROFESSIONAL REVIEW OF RESEARCHER-DEVELOPED
 INSTRUMENT OR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

To the Marywood ERC Members:

I, Dr. Gautier Mary _____ [reviewer's name], certify that I have reviewed the research instrument or interview questions developed by Sr. Kevin Karimi _____ [researcher's name] for use in the project entitled, Exploring the impact of non-traditional leadership training among Catholic Sisters in sub-Saharan Africa _____ [insert title of research study]. I can attest that the instrument or questions are appropriate for the nature of the research proposed.

I fully endorse the use of the researcher-developed item or items within this study.

Sincerely,

Mary L. Gautier
 Signature

Mary L. Gautier
 Printed Name

202-687-8086
 Telephone

30 July 2019
 Date

Ph.D.
 Credentials (Must have Master's or Higher)

Asst. Research Associate
 Professional Title

gautierm@georgetown.edu
 E-mail Address

C:\Shared Documents\IRB\IRB Forms
 Revised by ERC: 3/31/2017

Appendix I Professional Review of Instrument