



TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND ITS IMPLICATION FOR CHURCH GROWTH

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Abstract

Transformational leadership inspires and motivates followers to achieve exceptional outcomes by fostering a vision, encouraging innovation, and enhancing personal and spiritual growth. In the context of Church growth, transformational leadership plays a significant role in mobilizing congregants, promoting oneness, and driving numerical and spiritual expansion. It is characterized by sound vision, individualized attention, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation, enabling Church leaders to navigate a conducive environment for growth. It also engenders relational engagement, mission-driven initiatives, and cultivates a thriving faith community. Thus, the implications of transformational leadership for church growth include promoting members' engagement, providing sound discipleship training, fostering effective evangelism, building a resilient organizational structure, equipping for ministry and leadership roles, and ensuring sustainability and long-term growth, among others. This paper explicitly examines the concept, components, and traits of transformational leadership in church contexts, drawing on Biblical examples and strategies that contribute to magnanimous, healthy, and growing congregations. Further, the findings highlight that Churches led by transformational leaders experience qualitative spiritual maturity and quantitative growth.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership, Church Growth, and Implication.

Introduction

Transformational leadership is essential in any organization because it focuses on changing the system and followers to improve performance. Leaders in this style usually challenge and encourage their followers with a sense of purpose and enthusiasm. This system transforms an individual's behavior, thinking, and perceptions to achieve a particular goal. That is why Chika Ossai-Ugba affirmed that this leader has a vision and shares it with his team to inspire them and support everyone's success.ⁱ That is, a leader with this leadership style strives to achieve a positive change as a goal in an organization to enhance effective leadership and administration.

Furthermore, effective leadership determines the organization's effectiveness, and a church's leadership determines its growth. Some churches are split today due to a lack of leadership, as leaders have lost their distinctive qualities. Many churches are stagnant, while leaders are not as concerned with the Church's growth as they should be. Therefore, the thesis of this paper is that transformational leadership, if implemented in the Church, would enhance the Church's mission and growth. Gideon O. Adetunji affirmed that "if the leaders, ministerial and lay, display vision, devotion, and energy, their church will grow and prosper."ⁱⁱ This paper focuses on transformational leadership as a factor to be reckoned with in church mission expansion, because leaders determine what, how, and when to do things, which will either positively or negatively affect the Church's growth. This leadership paves the way for a shared vision and individual success, and when congregations feel they are sharing in something great, they will make every effort to do the best work for positive change in Church growth.

Concept of Transformational Leadership

Generally, leadership is a significant key in the development and growth of an organization. Simon A. Kolawole affirms that leadership is crucial to any human organization as it is central to human relationships and the ordering of society. The success and achievements of a group to a large extent will be proportional to the quality of its leadership."ⁱⁱⁱ There are different types and leadership styles: Bureaucratic, Autocratic, Participative, Laissez-Faire, Benevolent, and Transactional Leadership, among others. However, for this work's purpose, this aspect provides definitions and discusses scholars' views on transformational leadership, from its inception and peculiarity to its role in the Church's growth.

The uniqueness of transformational leadership lies in its focus on change for the betterment of an organization, which distinguishes it from other leadership styles. It is a leadership style first described by American historian and political thinker James MacGregor Burns in his 1978 book "Leadership" and later expanded by Bernard M. Bass in 1980. It is used by leaders with particular traits to work with their team members to identify change and develop the following action steps. It transforms others by developing and empowering individual followers to become competent leaders.^{iv} John Humphreys and Walter Einstein added that MacGregor coined the term "transformational leadership in 1978 and primarily focused on political leadership, and the term was later adopted in organizational management circles."^v That implies this type of leadership is concerned with and focused on individuals and organizations for positive results. It can produce positive outcomes, such as followers' devotion, good character, and leadership effectiveness, which are essential to church leadership and growth.

Mahesh Balaji and Vekat R. Krishnan affirmed that transformational leadership fosters moral development, tests ethical temperature within an organization, emphasizes positive development, and boosts supporters' self-interest.^{vi} That promotes peace and unity and allows followers to have freedom of choice for positive performance, unlike autocratic leadership, which lacks freedom of expression. Balaji and Krishnan added that transformational leadership can be experienced when leaders and followers draw individuals toward higher levels of motivation and morality, yielding positive results through the power of their behavior, talents, and vision. Furthermore, transformational leadership encourages followers to transform their thoughts, ideas, and inspiration to achieve a common goal.^{vii} That is, transformational leaders are always eager and

enthusiastic, not only in their course but also committed to supporting individuals' success. These leaders are usually worthy of emulation by the followers for their significant welfare activities, and this is expected of church leaders to care and carry the congregations along to achieve the missions of the Church because a transformational leader anticipates their followers' commitment to the cause, and trusts that they will do their best to yield results.

Ngoc-Hong Dao and Han In-Soo affirmed that transformational leadership differs from most other types of leadership because, rather than focusing on transactions and exchanges between leaders and followers, it emphasizes growth and development.^{viii} That is, transformational leadership does not focus on a specific individual or part but on the interests and success of everyone or a whole group to promote the institution's goal. It implies that what concerns a particular person concerns everyone in an organization, and that should be the concern of everyone in the Church, particularly the church leaders, if the Church is to grow. Transformational leaders ensure individuals transform, advance, and succeed. Therefore, these types of leaders are unique for the Church's growth because the essence of the gospel is to transform everybody into Christ's likeness.

Components of Transformational Leadership

These are essential parts of transformational leadership, fundamental dimensions that characterize transformational leaders and contribute to leadership effectiveness. It includes individualized consideration, idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation.

Individualised consideration

It involves individual willpower for self-growth and development, as well as mutual respect for individual opinions within the organization. The influence, ideals, and views of everyone are aligning with the team's expected goal. The leaders support and maintain sound communication with their followers and strive to be effective in assigning tasks to individuals to improve performance. It is a system in which everyone has a specific role and contributes to achieving a common goal. It implies that everyone's opinion is highly welcome to the growth and development of an organization. Eileen D. Wiltshire affirmed that individualized consideration is the level at which leaders attend to different followers' desires, performance as instructed, needs, and concerns.^{ix} There is tolerance for an individual's ideology, and this is paramount to the Church setting if the Church is to grow. That is, individuals and their needs are essential to the Church's success and growth.

Idealised influence

Leading by example motivates followers to follow their leaders because followers trust them based on the inevitable rationality and internalized ideals of such transformational leaders within an organization. Idealized influence focuses on being a role model to the followers, ready to sacrifice for the team's success. It enhances leaders' ability to give attention, offer encouragement, provide comfort, and offer support to their followers. Bernard M. Bass and Ronald E. Riggio affirmed that "transformational leaders behave in the ways that allow them to serve as examples for their followers."^x That is why the church leader must live an exemplary life; members are watching to emulate the leader's lifestyle, which can positively or negatively affect the Church's growth. It is ideal to be a role model for followers, particularly church members and leaders, for effective church growth.

Intellectual stimulation

Leaders always nurture individuals to be rational, knowledgeable, and self-independent. Yaser Mohammadnia et al. affirmed that learning is important to these leaders, and followers can ask questions that trouble their minds to figure out standard ways to implement their work and reason accurately about some tasks.^{xi} It implies that transformational leaders are concerned with building people who can reason, thereby stimulating a unique, effective teaching and learning process among followers. It is glaring when leaders are concerned about their followers' learning; it will surely bring positive change to individuals and the institution. These types of transformational leaders are urgently needed to promote learning among church members and drive positive change across every aspect of life, particularly for church growth.

Inspirational Motivation

Inspiration and motivation entail leaders encouraging followers to pursue a particular goal by describing the institution's objectives and the steps needed to achieve better results. Lale Gumusluoglu and Arzu Ilsev affirmed that inspirational motivation occurs when leaders articulate compelling visions to followers.^{xii} It implies that a leader inspires followers through a motivating vision, which attracts them to do their best and achieve future goals cooperatively. That applies to ministerial works and church expansion because vision is decisive for church growth. Kolawole affirmed that "vision will give leadership a sense of focus and help maintain direction."^{xiii} Oswald Sander added, "Those who have powerfully and permanently influenced their generation are people of vision who can see beyond what ordinary man can see."^{xiv} Thus, a transformational leader is a visionary leader fit for church growth.

Traits of Transformational Leadership

It is easy to identify a transformational leader with the following attributes, expected of every church leader to enhance church growth: leaders strive to promote effective change by living exemplary lives for followers to emulate. That involves leading by example, because leaders' lives serve as a guide for followers in an organization. The setting of purpose and goal to be achieved is characterized by transformational leadership worthy of emulation by church leaders for effective church growth. The leaders set goals for the followers as priorities to achieve at the end of every work in the system.

Additionally, the leaders stimulate, recognize, and motivate the followers to achieve the set goal. Weichun Zhu, Bruce Avolio, and Fred Walumbwa affirmed that transformational leaders are frequently seen as the most stimulating individuals within an organization.^{xv} The leaders encourage the followers to be steadfast in their work. These leaders support and are willing to risk innovative techniques to develop the organization. Lloyd M. Basham affirmed that transformational leaders are dynamic, proactive, and investment decision-makers.^{xvi} It implies that the leaders work in a team spirit and are rightly behind their followers. The leaders identify their followers' strengths and weaknesses and proffer solutions. These types of leaders are selfless, caring, and always inspiring others with a vision to achieve good results. That makes transformational leaders unique and greatly needed for the Church's growth, especially for the contemporary Church. However, some followers take these leaders for granted because they are liberal.

Biblical Examples of Transformational Leadership

This aspect focused on the transformational Leadership of Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Paul.

These leaders are agents of change who transform lives to the glory of God, a worthy model for contemporary church leaders seeking effective church growth.

Abraham as a Transformational Leader

Abraham, a simple clan leader from Ur and one of the examples of Leadership in the Bible, became the father of many nations through his encounter with and vision of God, and was popularly called the father of faith (Genesis 17:4-5; 50:24-25). Abraham became a transformational leader due to his adherence to God's vision, his faith, and his courage to become many nations despite the challenges and trials of life he encountered, particularly his love, justice, and caring, and his intent to sacrifice his Son, Isaac, to God. Hershey Friedman and Mitchel Langbert affirmed that transformational leaders are ready to make sacrifices on behalf of their followers and tend to encourage them to do the same.^{xvii} The courage to take a responsible risk and task is one of the emblems of effective leadership. That enhances a leader's ability to be focused in the face of dire situations.

Abraham shared his vision of becoming many nations and called together 318 followers to join him in a war against the four kings in Genesis 18:1-17. Abraham influenced his followers to trust God for victory and eventually achieve the goal. That can be regarded as an idealized influence on success in an organization. He was humble enough to share the vision and carry the followers with courage, love, and integrity. Like Abraham, church leaders must be visionary and protect their integrity without compromising their faith, even in hard times.

Moses as a Transformational Leader

Moses possesses transformational leadership qualities, as evidenced by his vision of God's promise to Israel to reach the promised land and his constant reminders of Israel as God's chosen people (Deuteronomy 6:10-12). Moses listens to his father-in-law's instruction, Jethro and assigns some men to duties over people, which enhances the division of labor in his administration, specifically while in the desert, to reduce stress. Moses appointed Joshua as his successor after being the leader for 40 years. That is significant in selecting leaders in the Church for church growth. Moses' leadership model requires teamwork, transparency, and individualized consideration. Every transformational leader listens to the tiniest instruction in decision-making and works toward it for good results, as Moses listened to his father-in-law, allowing him to win more followers.

Moses was humble, especially when given a particular task; he said, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh? (Exodus 3:11). He allows Aaron to serve as an intermediary, which helps him win followers to himself and be acceptable before the congregations. Moses' concern was to liberate his people and lead them to the promised land. Caring for others is one of the traits of transformational leaders found in Moses' Leadership. When the Israelites turned their backs on God by making Golden Calf and God's wrath was against them, Moses told God to kill him if God did not spare the congregations (Exodus 31: 1-11). That is a leader who is ready to sacrifice his life for the salvation, freedom, promotion, and success of others. Such a leader is peculiar to the Church's growth for effective transformation. Moses motivated his people to be committed to achieving the ultimate goal of an independent nation and to eradicate the polytheistic practices inherited from Egypt (Exodus 19:8). Paul Herskovitz and Esther E. Klein affirmed that some of Moses' outstanding qualities of leadership include tenacity, initiative, integrity, and self-confidence.^{xviii} Therefore, Moses was an effective transformational leader who empowered his people with various tasks.

Jesus Christ as a Transformational Leader

Jesus Christ is the perfect example of a transformational leader and is inevitably to be emulated by contemporary church leaders for leadership effectiveness and to promote church growth. Samuel A. Alabi affirmed that "Jesus took raw, undisciplined, unschooled, and ordinary men and women, and they were transformed to changers, movers, and shakers of the world (Acts 4:13).^{xix} That is the lifestyle, the teachings, and, especially, the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, transforming creation and humanity. Simon A. Kolawole affirmed, "Jesus set the pattern of how to be a good and successful leader. Jesus was willing to give up what He was to be a model leader."^{xx} It implies that Jesus Christ sacrificed himself for his disciples and humanity to save man from eternal damnation. Christ's leadership is to train his disciples to continue his work on earth. K. Blanchard affirmed that Jesus Christ is the penultimate model of transformational leadership.^{xxi}

Jesus Christ demonstrated the life of an exemplary leader. He was willing to wash his disciples' feet, and his perfect, sinless, human life ended in self-sacrifice at Calvary. Thus, he revealed to his followers how to serve and required no less of those who would carry on his work on earth. It is glaring from Jesus' model of leadership that greatness is not found in rank or position but in service. He made it known that authentic leadership is grounded in love, which is essential in service: "The son of man did not come to be served but to serve, "I am with you to serve" (Mark 10:45; Luke 22:27). Furthermore, Jesus Christ did not permit his disciples to use their positions for selfish motives. His leadership was carried out through teachings, training, and a keen interest in individuals' close relationships and solving their problems.

Paul, as a Transformational Leader

Apostle Paul shared his belief in the qualities of effective transformational leadership with his son, Timothy, in the Lord (1 Timothy 3:1-6). He was a leader with many followers and influenced them positively. Additionally, Paul called others to emulate him: "Follow my steps, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). Paul was a responsible leader of all first-century missionaries and traveled across the Roman Empire spreading the gospel. Paul encouraged and motivated the younger Church he established during his earlier missionary journey (1 Thessalonians 1:2). Lee J. Whittington, Tricia M. Pitts, and others affirmed that Paul's transformational leadership style aimed to produce leaders who could empower others through adequate preparation to take over his evangelistic work.^{xxii}

One powerful attribute that characterizes Paul as a Transformational leader is influence. He used his social, religious, intellectual, and spiritual influence to transform his followers, particularly in the knowledge of Christ. Paul was compassionate, courageous, and dynamic in his leadership model. He made others passionate about the gospel of Christ in the early Church (2 Timothy 1:15; 2:17:18; 4:1). Paul's compassion for the gospel led him to write many epistles that are essential and apologetic for contemporary church leaders and church growth. Paul uses his gifts to transform people. Michael Cooper affirms that he did not use his gifts for personal gain and, instead, strived to equip others within the ministry.^{xxiii} All the above biblical examples of transformational leaders, among others, are paramount for church leaders to advance the Church's growth in this contemporary era.

Implications for the Church Growth

This aspect focuses on the implications of transformational leadership for the Church's growth across all areas of Church administration, including mission, spiritual, physical, numerical, financial, extension, and health. Fahlbusch Erwin affirmed "Church growth as church renewal, organization and structural maturation, and the empirical veritable numerical growth of the churches and theory of how and why churches grow or decline."^{xxiv} Therefore, transformational leaders' vision, direction, support, and motivation are essential for church growth.

Transformational leadership articulates the vision for church growth. The Bible says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18). Transformational leaders work with vision to lead their followers toward the expected goal of church growth. Suppose there will be a positive change in church planning, planting, and making known the manifold of God to others in the world. In that case, the leaders' vision is inevitable, characterizing transformational leadership as effective for the Church's growth. Having a sound vision to be pursued in the Church, particularly in the context of a church mission to evangelize, nurture, disciple, fellowship, and worship, will lead to church expansion across all aspects if the vision is faithfully shared by leaders with followers and pursued as a team in the Church. Abraham pursued the vision of becoming many nations; Moses was moved and pursued the vision of leading the Israelites out of the land of Egypt in the Old Testament; Jesus Christ, Paul, and other apostles in the early Church moved with vision, and the Church experienced effective church transformation and growth.

Jesus' vision influenced his disciples even after his death, prompting them to propagate the gospel for church growth (Mathew 16:13-20). The apostles were able to turn the world over to Christ through their transformational leadership, to the point of death, moving from house to house, city to city, and nation to nation. People who received Jesus as their Lord and Savior were baptized. About 3,000 were added to the Church in a day (Acts 2:41). Thus, the apostles became agents of transformation in their era through God-given revelation, leading and being obedient to God's voice.

Transformational Leadership Provides Direction for Church Growth. Providing direction is essential to transformational leaders to promote positive change in church growth. Commonly, it is where the church leaders lead the members that they will go. Therefore, if the church leader does not direct the Church to any mission work, the members may not perform mission activities well. Fortunately, God's primary work in the Church is to do a mission. The Church is to expand the gospel beyond her immediate environment. Church leaders must direct members toward evangelism, starting within the church. S. A. K. Olaleye affirmed that "the environment where the church is located is her first constituency for church growth."^{xxv} It implies that a church leader is to lead the church members to witness to Christ to others, beginning in the Church's community and extending to distant locations to reach everyone in the environment for church expansion.

It also includes leading for Church planting and Cross-Cultural Missions. Simon A. Ishola affirmed that it is essential that the Church remember its reason for existence to reflect its plan for the future.^{xxvi} That is, the church leaders are to have the foresight to lead the congregations in establishing more churches as membership increases, because it is the mind of Christ to expand his Church, and the actual way to do that is to plant new churches. The book of Acts reveals the growth and multiplication of local churches, and, following the example, churches should increase every aspect of church life. Believers' spiritual life, physical life, health, and social life, among others, should be multiplied for good. The Church's structure needs to expand as its membership grows.

Transformational leaders are expected to lead the members to achieve the Church's growth. The Church's mission is to reach different tribes, not a particular tribe, in outreach and evangelism. The mission of the Church should not be limited to its location alone. However, it should extend to people of other cultures through the transformative leadership of the Church, because the gospel is for all people in different locations (Matthew 28:11-20).

Transformational Leadership Promotes Support for Church Growth. The Church will undoubtedly grow if the leader provides the necessary resources and support. That requires adequate discipline, sacrifice, and support, because the church leader must be ready to provide everything essential to advancing the Church. It implies that the church leader must support all transformative plans to enhance church growth. A plan and a defined mission statement will help the Church clarify its task. That is why Truman Brown affirmed that the Church, through her transformative leaders, should write a statement that reflects a personal search and understanding of the Church's task as prescribed in scripture and guided by the Holy Spirit.^{xxvii} It implies that setting priorities helps the Church realize and accomplish the most significant things first, with the support of transformational leaders.

The church leaders must lead and support the church programs to enhance and achieve the purpose of such programs on the calendar. Charles A. Tidwell affirmed the need to implement the planned initiatives, noting that the best plan has little value unless it is put into practice by church leaders.^{xxviii} The church leaders must have a vision and work it out by leading by example, in humility and with sound communication, for the members to emulate. A transformational church leader does not insult his followers to win more souls to Christ.

Additionally, transformational leadership enhances motivation and mobilization for church growth. Uzoma J. Uzoesi affirmed that mobilization is a critical strategic function of the Church for missions aimed at building, promoting, and fueling the essence of church missions.^{xxix} Without a conscious plan to motivate and mobilize church members, the Church's growth will be affected. That is why transformational leadership is needed for church growth: to motivate and foster a spirit of teamwork that mobilizes followers to achieve a defined goal. The mobilization through motivation begins with awakening the members' mission consciousness for church expansion. The word of God must be the basic foundation for measuring knowledge of church growth. The word of God should serve as the benchmark for motivating and mobilizing individuals to expand the church. Preaching and teaching should be motivated by the church's mission, and Christ should be the center of the church's message. According to Akinwale Oloyede, "God in Jesus supersedes all other mediums of revelation and the fullest word of God ever to be spoken."^{xxx} The church's Bible study, discipleship, and prayer life should center on becoming like Christ for mission purposes.

Church leaders should be able to mobilize volunteers for missions to enhance church growth, including selecting the right, competent personnel. There is an abuse of time in our worship today, discouraging many people from coming to the Church on time. Therefore, church leaders must be sensitive to the touch of service in general and encourage church members to balance church worship, time consciousness, and management. Also, the church leaders must know how to motivate and mobilize the church members to give for church growth, particularly mission activities, in a godly manner, because fulfilling mission work requires financial responsibility and accountability. Emiola Sunday Opasina affirmed that all monies collected in the Church belong to

God. Hence, individual leaders will be accountable for how it is spent (Psalm 24:1).^{xxx} That is why Solomon Ademola Ishola affirmed that the remarkable role of serving as leaders within the Church of God calls for a serious reflection. If there will be change agents and thus transform the world for the Lord, they must be willing to pay the price of transformational leadership.^{xxxii} It implies leadership by action for church growth.

Conclusion

It is glaring that the Church must experience genuine growth; influential transformational leaders must lead it, because church growth is more than making a wish; it is a matter of sacrificial labor to reflect Jesus Christ, whose Transformational leadership style exceeded those of synagogue leaders. The leaders must know that the purpose of the Church is to fulfill its mission, and they are expected to lead by example, primarily for church growth. Thus, transformational leadership is inevitable for positive change regarding church growth.

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