Impact Of Relational Leadership on Effective Services of Church Volunteer Workers

Ishola, Olufemi J.

Lecturer, The Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso

Abstract

The church thrives on the effective engagement of volunteer workers who give their time, money, and talents to promote the gospel through cooperative work with the church pastors and other church staff. Upon this assumption, the writers intend to promote relational leadership theory that can help pastors and other church staff engage and maximize their potential. In achieving this singular purpose, the writers explored the relational leadership theory and described who volunteers are in the church context. The research also discusses relational issues among volunteer church workers, while impacts that implementation of this theory could have on church workers were finally explained. The article reveals that relational leadership would help leaders prioritize interest in the church volunteer workers' personal life; encourages formal and informal communication; inspires teamwork; and guides church volunteer workers toward achieving their job descriptions.

Keywords: church, leadership, volunteer, effective, relational.

INTRODUCTION

Since man is a relational being, the only way to make man productive is through healthy relationships in any organization, religious or secular. The extent to which healthy relationship is practiced, promoted, and sustained depends on the orientation of leaders in such organization. Hence, the people who have been called to be leaders in various organizations must learn and practice relational leadership with other members of the organization to bring about healthiness and fruitfulness to the entire system. From a biblical point of view, God can be said to be a relational being because after he had created man, He ensured that He fellowship with him from time to time to make him feel His presence and show him that He cares for him. This is a clarion

call for church volunteer workers who are equally acting in a leadership capacity in the local church in various organs and units to know, understand, and practice the principles guiding relational leadership that will bring about effectiveness and efficiency in the discharge of their duties. In light of this, the paper will address the concept of leadership, relationships and volunteer workers, discuss theology behind volunteer workers in the local church, explain relational issues among volunteer workers and finally proffer relational solutions to the problem identified.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Relational Leadership

In getting a clearer picture of relational leadership, one must first understand the meaning of relationship and leadership. According to Ishola & Oladipo (2020), a Relationship is a means of building a conducive environment for an individual or organization's rapid growth and development. This implies that relationship refers to everything put in place to make a person or group interact healthily, bringing about productivity. The relationship could be primary (expressive) or secondary (instrumental). According to Oxford reference, while an expressive ties relationship involves a commitment to one person, arising out of kinship or feelings of love, an instrumental ties relationship merely involves cooperation to achieve some limited and immediate goal (relationship between a doctor and a patient). Furthermore, expressive ties relationship is sometimes employed to characterize social relationships considered to be an end in themselves as against goal-oriented ones.

Several scholars have attempted to describe leadership among those who are Adetunji, 2010; Achua, and Lussier, Maxwell 1993, and Maxwell 2003 describe leadership as "the influence process of leaders and followers to achieve organizational objectives through change." McCauley (2010) opines that leadership is "a social process for generating a direction, alignment, and commitment needed for an individual to work together productively towards collective outcomes." Also, Livetary Weem, as reported by Adetunji (2010, 2), explains leadership to mean the development and articulation of a shared vision, motivation of those key people without whom the vision cannot become a reality, and gaining the corporation of most people involved. From Ordway Teads classical point of view, as Adetunji (2010, 2) reported, leadership deals with "the activity of influencing people to cooperate towards some goal which they come to find desirable." This implies that leaders determine directly or indirectly what happens to the organization (Akanni,

2009, 28). One of the world's most concise descriptions is that "leadership is influence" (Maxwell 1993, 1). Hence, going by these definitions, it could be said that leadership is not the art of coercing people to perform a task; instead, it is a natural influence on human and material resources to be adequately harnessed toward achieving a corporate goal.

Relational leadership, therefore, can be said to be a leader's genuine investment in their staff's personal and professional development, regardless of performance outcome (Mazza 2019). Relational leadership can then be seen as a pro-social act of creating an enabling environment for the follower (staff members) to grow through interaction with the organization's investment in their personal and professional capacities. When one invests meaningfully in the employees, the leader can "facilitate stronger relationships, improve staff performance, and a better camp experience for everyone involved (Mazza 2019)." It is worth noting that the focus of relational leadership is not the output of the employee or staff as the case may be in the first place, but their holistic growth, which a leader/management believes would generate positive value for the organization.

Relational leadership has the potential to nurture their staff to ensure their growth. The perspective of relational leadership on the staff members is not what they are but what they can be. Hence, relational leaders are responsible for improving their staff in all facets of life to become better tools for themselves and the organization. Competencies in relational leadership include leading employees, interpersonal savvy, work team orientation, conflict management, managing changes in others, and effectively confronting problems of employees (Hangeior, Ihagh, & Umogbai 2016, 1327).

Volunteers

In any organization, whether religious or circular, volunteer workers have often been sought after because there are specific tasks to be carried out with little or no financial resources to get them done. Thus, volunteerism from time immemorial has been raising people who are ready to spend their time and talent without any financial reward to achieve organizational goals and purposes. Volunteerism has been defined as "voluntary, deliberate service to others over time and without compensation"(Psychology.iresearchnet.com/social-psychology/prosocialbehaviour/ volunteerism). Stukas (2014, 1) further states that volunteerism is a "form of pro-social behavior

that involves a freely chosen decision to commit a sustainable amount of time and effort to help another person, group or cause, typically through a non-profit organization

All these definitions point to the fact that volunteerism involves the free usage of time and effort to help people or organizations achieve a course.

Ishola (2019, 10) has also described volunteers as "people who are unpaid for the job; people who know they don't have to do the job for a living; and people who can quit at any time." These descriptions suggest that organizations, especially religious ones, would find volunteer workers more valuable due to the many functions it needs to carry out from time to time with a very view staff. The church's discipleship, mission, family, and administrative functions need volunteer leaders to cooperate with the church-paid team (Tidwell 1996, 157). A critical look at various church functions reveals that pastors and some view workers on church payroll cannot effectively carry out all the church activities. Hence, there is a need to raise volunteer workers who will be committed to these functional areas without any desire to receive financial compensation.

Peterson describes four key attributes/qualities expected of volunteer workers. These are:

1.   Trust: Through every day behavior, volunteers expect that the leader provides evidence that they can be trusted. They always want to ensure their leader does what he says, answers honestly, and lives transparently. Followers are sometimes interested in a leader's challenges, obstacles, and needs to achieve larger goals.

2.   Stability: Leaders with faithful volunteers/follower remains calm in the face of horror and give a sense of confidence to those around them.

3.   Compassion: Volunteers have an unrelenting passion for people and show empathy when those folks are enduring hard times.

4.   Hope: Volunteerism requires that the leader has an unwavering belief that their product/service will succeed and change lives.

ELEMENTS/COMPONENTS OF RELATIONAL LEADERSHIP

This aspect of the paper deals with notable features of relational leadership. These elements are in-exhaustive; the researchers have chosen to discuss some selected ones that could help within the scope of this paper.

The first element of relational leadership is the leader's relationship with the Trinity since the researchers believe that nobody can build a meaningful relationship with fellow beings without

genuine encounters with God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. The extent to which one knows God is the extent to which one will relate with other beings. In other words, Man's relationship with other beings would be meaningful and fruitful as man ensures that his relationship with the Trinity is unbroken. Little wonder the great commandment given by Jesus says you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, souls, and entire mind; and the second is to love your neighbor as yourself. The second relational leadership element is the individual leader's capacity to build relationships with themselves. This buttresses the aspect of the emotional intelligence of a leader. An emotionally intelligent leader would be able to coordinate himself in all situations and relate well to circumstances that may surround them. When a leader fails to lead himself first, there is no gain in saying he will fail to lead others. From the writers' perspective, leading others seem complex; it is not as difficult as building the capacity to conduct oneself. Self-management involves emotional self-control, transparency, adaptability, achievement, initiative, and optimism. Social awareness entails a sense of empathy, organization awareness, and service (Daniel Coleman, Richard Boyatiz, and Annie Mckee, 2002).

The third element of relational leadership is the ability of the leader to build a meaningful and productive relationship with fellow leaders. It is not enough for a leader to possess the ability to lead himself; the expected result is to use that skill to lead others. Understanding other people would not be difficult once a man could understand himself better. This is the second aspect of emotional intelligence as far as a leader is concerned. Daniel Coleman, Richard Boyatiz, and Annie Mckee (2002) note that a leader who resonates with energy and enthusiasm would make the organization thrive. In contrast, a leader who spreads negativity and dissonance would make the organization found.

The fourth element of a relational leader is the ability to build a productive relationship with the church's followers in the context of this paper. After the leader of a church has the skills of working with other leaders comprising various heads of units and departments of the church, the next point of the agenda is to lead them to develop the church members. Oyedemi (2018), redefines it as the capacity of the followers to take an active role in following a leader with willing cooperation and teamwork. Hence, it is safe to opine that pastors become relational as he engages their followers in meaningful interaction towards contributing to the growth and development of the church.

The fifth element of relational leadership vital to an organization's success is the ability of a leader to encourage members' relationship with the vision and mission of an organization. Vision and mission serve as a direction in which an organization turns. Without an idea, energy ebbs low, deadlines are missed, personal agendas begin to surface, production falls, and people scatter (Maxwell, 1993; 139). The church needs a leader to set the vision and ensure it is achieved.

Relationship with stakeholders and support network is other elements of relational leadership. In the context of the church where the writer writes from, the stakeholders include members of the church, the pastoral team, and different groups of individuals who contribute to the church financially, morally, and even instructively. A relational leader must ensure that these people are held in high esteem not as Lord and master or dictator but for respect and value purpose. From the writer's perspective, relational leadership is more value-driven than fame-driven. This is because a relational leader would appreciate the grace and gifts God has deposited in the supportive networks and stakeholders in achieving a collective goal.

The last relational leadership element to be discussed is the leader's intentionality in building a lasting relationship with the source. The source here refers to the connecting point of all organizations. For example, the Nigerian Baptist Convention is the source for all the local Baptist churches in Nigeria. Hence, a pastor that encourages relational leadership will never promote actions that can severely affect their relationship with the Convention and other related covenanted bodies like Conferences and Associations. The significance of this source would be motivating instruments that would drive church pastors to encourage their churches to contribute meaningfully.

RELATIONAL ISSUES AMONG CHURCH VOLUNTEER WORKERS

Volunteer workers are human beings who can develop attitudes that are inimical to the growth and development of the church. Most volunteer workers have challenges relating to one another even though their services are rendered without pay. The writers intend to discuss some significant relational issues among church volunteer workers.

Communication: Communication is the bedrock of every meaningful relationship. It is a glue that binds people together in meaningful connections, personal and professional. In an organization, it is the ability to communicate that connects people to others in an organization, an industry, and society (Baron et al. 2008, 285). When communication is not adequately managed among members

of volunteer workers, their relationships will be significantly affected. This would affect not only the individuals but also the entire organization system. Robinson (Utake 2019, 119) opines that failure to communicate openly and honestly will destroy interpersonal relationships between the church ministers (staff), especially in multiple ministries. Hence, those serving in leadership capacities should model and champion the course of open communication throughout the organization (Anthony & Estep 2005, 237).

Team Work: This is another relational issue in leadership, as some members of volunteer workers find it very difficult to develop a spirit of oneness in carrying out their assigned tasks. Teamwork is critical to church ministries because the church was given a special assignment to propagate the gospel, but the means of achieving this differs. Thus, when members of volunteer workers fail to understand this philosophy of church work and life, the division will not go down well with the church. This happens in the book of I Corinthians 1:10-17, ... one of you says, 'I follow Paul'; another, 'I follow Appolos'; another, 'I follow Cephas,' still another, 'I follow Christ.'

Unclear Job description: Most a time, volunteer workers of the church find it difficult to relate well with one another when they do not understand the nature of the task given to them. Instead of asking for clarification, they result in grumbling. Fight and frustration are the marks of any organization which does not have a job description for its staff members (Ayo-Obiremi 2019, 279). Through job descriptions in a multi-pastoral staff ministry, it is easy to evaluate the overall progress of the church.

Character traits: Volunteer workers have different character traits that inform differing responses to issues concerning the church. Some of these traits, when left unchecked, could be counter-productive. In his book "why you act the way you do," Tim Lahaye characterized trait analysis that could help define members of the organization more objectively.

Cultural differences: Apart from the innate tendencies of a human being to behave differently, the cultural background of members of volunteer workers is another critical relational issue that must be addressed. It is quite unfortunate that some church leaders expect their followers to behave in a coordinated manner when they are aware that their congregation comprises different people from different cultural backgrounds.

Status/organizational strata: This also creates a challenge in relational leadership as members of church workers, especially volunteer ones, find it very difficult to relate with pastors from the

corporate strata level. When a leader emphasizes status above a relationship, the effect is always disastrous.

Bossy Syndrome: This is related to the above issue but slightly different. Some pastors assume bossy roles over church volunteer workers, and the workers are not pleased with this. This happens as they come to the understand that their service though is unto God but voluntary. Thus, it demands some level of respect from the pastoral team and even other members of church staff.

RELATIONAL LEADERSHIP' S IMPACTS ON EFFECTIVE SERVICES OF CHURCH VOLUNTEER WORKERS.

Relational leadership will ensure interest in individual volunteer workers by probing into their social, spiritual, and emotional life to assist them to overcoming challenges in those areas. As each team member acquires and practices relational leadership elements, they would build a community social, spiritual, and emotional life that would engender the corporate goal of the church. Members going through a hard time would feel the significant impact of being part of the team, while those rejoicing would equally have a sense of belonging as other members rejoice with them. In other words, relational leadership among church volunteers would encourage concern for individual members' needs/challenges. As this is being achieved, the leader would intentionally keep the ethical standards of the church and simultaneously unconsciously combat those lifestyles that can affect the entire system ((Hangeior, Ihagh, & Umogbai 2016, 1328).

 Also, relational leadership encourages formal and informal communication models. There is no gain in saying that communication is the number one tool relational leaders must learn to use effectively. The reason is that it is the medium by which all relational elements can be carried out and when this is lost or not effectively maximized, the expected result will not be forthcoming. Hence, relational leadership can help volunteer church workers work effectively as the informal communication model allows for closer interaction over the formal communication model, promoting authority and hierarchical order. Even though the writer believes that formal communication cannot be totally erased in church setting; however, when it comes to volunteer workers, its promotion must be reduced to the barest minimum so that people will not get discouraged. Taking communication to an advanced level, Hornstrup et al (2012, 22) opines that communication must be shifted from what the communicators want to say to how they want to say

it because the communication medium has a relational approach. In agreement with their view, when proper attention is given to the medium of disseminating information, such communication would achieve relational results.

Furthermore, relational leadership works towards inspiring members of volunteer workers to work cooperatively in unity (team spirit). The tools for inspiration used by relational leadership here are all forms of motivation that could encourage volunteer workers to work more. This is usually done to achieve team spirit because volunteer workers have several things that could get them discouraged. It must be a genuine team of God's people who possesses gifts from God and must equally be ready to utilize such gifts in a beautiful fellowship as a team (Ayo-Obiremi 2019, 284). The fact that they are not being reimbursed, appreciated by the church, and even recognized could quickly put them off. However, when the relational leadership approach is implemented, some things that can motivate them can be implemented. Things like training, awards, occasional appreciation in the form of gifts, and consistent visitation of church leaders to volunteer workers houses among other things. Jesus, the perfect example of a relational leader, practiced this on many occasions as he visited the house of some of his disciples' homes for social ministries.

In addition, relational leadership ensures that volunteer workers are well guided to understand their job description. This aspect is vital to effective volunteer church workers as many do not have any ideas relating to the expected task assigned to perform. Through job description, it is easy to evaluate the overall progress of the ministry (Ayo-Obiremi 2019, 285). Hence, a relational leader is expected to overrule the costly assumption that volunteer church workers would easily understand their job description without adequate explanation. Relational leadership at this point would ensure that job descriptions are well explained to the volunteer workers so that they can raise questions wherever they are having issues.

More so, relational leadership helps in understanding and in relating with volunteer workers based on their different character traits. The church's volunteer workers include people from different sexual, academic, spiritual, emotional, and even social-cultural backgrounds. So, its application would enrich the church's social and spiritual life when it is done with caution. Relational leaders could therefore help raise this consciousness in the mind of all the members of the workforce so that their communication can be more effective and that clarifications on argued opinions can be properly sought after.

Relational leadership could as well balances authority flow in the organization strata. Mainly in a formal organization of which belongs, there are always well-stated lines of authority between the senior pastor, other ministers, administrative officers, and volunteer workers. When these lines of authority and organizational strata are strictly observed, group members will find it very difficult to relate well because each will handle assignments according to lay down rules and regulations. Also, the communication would be too formal, and the clarifications may be challenging. Hence, where relational leadership is allowed, even though members of the volunteer workers of the church are aware of the existing lines of authority, the informal elements in communication may help to facilitate productivity.

Finally, relational leadership neutralizes the bossy syndrome in individual team members. This makes leadership more than unidirectional because it accepts leadership when it occurs (Hunt & Dodge 2000 in the words of Hangeior, Ihagh, & Umogbai 2016, 1326). Where relational leadership is practiced, members of the team (church volunteer workers) would never see church pastors and other ministers as their bosses but as friends in ministry with visual elements of respect for their offices. The pastors and other ministers, too, will not lord over volunteer workers but will engage them humanely. Some churches have lost touch with their teaming youth by abusing their personalities and professions, resulting in total and partial disengagement of such youth from the church. Hence, when the contemporary gospel ministers engage in relational leadership, the rate at which church members volunteer to work will increase.

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that maximization of church volunteer workers for effective services in the local church can be achieved as apex church leaders implement a relational leadership style. The volunteer workers ranging from deacons and deaconesses, departmental heads, and others, would give a sense of commitment and dedication to the task they may be assigned as they discover that their leader gives attention to their issues that can negatively affect their productivity. This would cause them to ensure the success of such a leader and contribute to the total growth of the church; the church leaders are therefore enjoyed to maximize the possibility of enhancing their followers' capacity through relational leadership. The writers recommend that Church pastors seek to understand the concept of relational leadership to apply it in their local churches and that the church volunteer workers must be ready to sacrifice their comfort even though their services are not being

reimbursed. The Church Pastors are also advised to identify cultural, educational, and spiritual differences among church volunteer workers to relate well with them.

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