Idealized Influence and Church Leaders Performance, the case of Transformational Church Leadership Graduates

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Abstract: **This study sought to investigate the influence of Idealized Influence on church leader's performance focusing on the Pan Africa Christian University (PAC) Transformational Church Leadership (TCL) diploma program graduates of 2016 and 2017 in selected churches in Kenya.**

The Transformational Leadership Theory guided the study. The study used pragmatism research philosophy to conduct a descriptive research. Quantitative and qualitative data was collected using survey and interviews respectively. This study adopted both stratified and purposive sampling. A sample of 158 graduates and 59 congregants/members from 14 Counties in Kenya, and 6 key informant interviews of senior organizational leaders were used to measure the variables of the study. The quantitative data was prepared and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 22.0). The recordings from the zoom interviews were transcribed using Otter.ai and transferred to Miner Lite for coding and organized into themes. The study found out that leader's idealized influence had a positive and significant correlation with church leader's performance among graduates, with a Pearson correlation of r=0.527. The study revealed that idealized influenced graduates/church leaders modeled the taught Christian values, Christian disciplines and character which significantly influenced church growth. The study concluded that TCL trained church leaders practiced idealized influence which positively and significantly increased the church leader's performance in Kenya. The study recommended the use of the TCL program to churches as a means of training church leaders to modeling Christian values, disciplines, and character and inspire the members/congregation enhance their performance and enable the church achieve its goals and objectives.

Key word: **Church Leadership, Idealized Influence, Performance, Transformational Leadership**

I. INTRODUCTION

This study presents an introduction to the background of the study, the literature review, the study methodology, findings, recommendations and the conclusion of the study.

Background of the Study

Successful leadership is only sustainable with the continued effective training and development of those in leadership positions. Leadership is a skill that one can learn (Avolio, 2011). This study helps to identify some of the benefits of transformational leadership development that will enhance leadership effectiveness and organizational

performance of the TCL graduates in the church in Kenya. Available literature points to the fact that there is a need for church leadership development (Barentsen, 2011; Baxter, 201).

The church has had to deal with a scarcity of transformational leaders around the globe since the coming of the Holy Spirit, and this scarcity of trained leaders has affected the church leaders performance (church growth) (Joynt & Dreyer, 2013). Students who attend seminaries or Bible Colleges to be trained for ministry, graduate always feeling inadequate to take up the leadership roles in the church, for the emphasis of the training is on doctrine and Christian living without considering leadership (Barna Group, 2017; White, 2011).

Mwambazambi and Banza, (2014) indicated that the most significant issue in the church today is the need for well-developed transformational leaders. Their study also indicated that the local church is the place where most effective transformational leaders are conceived and nurtured because they allow the leaders to practically apply what they have learned to grow the church.

To help South African churches create their own transformational approaches to church-based leadership training, Watson (2012) recommended research be carried out to establish the influence of the church leader's spiritual lifestyle of an intimate relationship with God and character formation to serve as a role models.

Looking at a Kenyan church perspective Nkonge, (2012) pointed out that the church as the most trusted institution has failed to offer trained reliable leaders to the church and community, and recommended that the church re-thinks her training system to produce well equipped and reliable transformational clergy and lay leaders. Clergy and lay leaders in the church hold pivotal positions in stirring the church in the direction that it needs to go. However, this depends on how well they are trained to lead the way.

The TCL program was designed to train church leaders to meet the demand for more transformational church leaders who are capable of ministering to the need of the church. The program has been training church leaders for the last 10 years and has graduated 2013 church leaders with 1973 (98%)

coming from Kenya and 2% from other countries (PAC University archive). To date, no evaluation has been done to determine the influence of the TCL program on the 2013 graduate's performance using parameters of idealized influence. The TCL program has not been proven to influence transformational leaders for church performance. This study therefore aims at finding out the shreds of evidence of the transformation of the church leaders who studied in the TCL program and their contribution to church performance. A survey of a sample of 158 graduates, 59congregants/members from 14 Counties in Kenya, and 6 senior leaders from church organizations that have been using TCL program for training were interviewed to explore and determine if there existed a relationship between this transformational leadership training and church leader's performance.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Transformational Leadership and Institutional Performance

The idea of transformational leadership is well received in the schools, hospitals, businesses and all types of organizations, and even the church (Ayiro, 2014; Bass & Riggio, 2016; Barine, & Minja, 2014; Fogarty, 2013; Ishikawa, 2012; Mbithi, K'Obonyo, & Munyoki, 2016). However, it is relatively new knowledge to many in the context of training transformational church leaders. Transformational Leadership Theory is reinforced by 40 years of study that link transformational leadership to positive performance outcomes in individuals, groups, and organizations (Bass & Riggio, 2014; Barine, & Minja, 2014; Burns, 2010; Hargis, Watt, & Piotrowski, 2011; Ishikawa, 2012; Kouzes & Posner, 2014; Mbithi, K'Obonyo, & Munyoki, 2016; Rutledge, 2010; Yukl, 2012).

Transformational leadership differs from other leadership styles because of its personal growth, role modelling of values and morals of both the leader, followers (Bass & Riggio, 2015; 2016). Burns (2010) describes transformational leadership as a leadership style that has its foundation on alteration in individuals and society by developing essential and positive transformation in the members with the result of turning them into leaders. Church leader's transformation should have a direct impact on the leader, member/congregation, and in turn on the organizational performance (Hoxha, 2015). Trmal et al (2015) asserted that transformational leadership is effective because it initiates changes in each leader's actions and forms the support required to authorize the recognition of church aims which contributes to its complete performance.

Multiple studies have been done relating to transformational leadership and the church (Fogarty, 2013; Gergory, 2019; Rumley, 2011; White, 2012). Transformational leadership components have shown to produce positive organizational outcomes for churches (Fogarty, 2013). The plain feature of transformational leadership is that it is about transformation of the condition, the individual and the organization (Gergory, 2019).

The world's future should be essentially built on the hope of the local church and the influences of its leaders. The church must effectively purpose to train its leaders for the twenty first century (Baxter, 2011). Every church leadership dispensation is liable for selecting, hiring, teaching, and advancing leaders, for without qualified leaders the church will decline and perish (Moss, 2014). The greatest example of transformative leadership training in the entire Bible is that of Jesus Christ and His twelve disciples where He spent over three years training this group of men from various backgrounds Mark 1:16-20 (Burkus, 2010, this is the part that TCL program is committed to working with the church to fulfil.

Church Leadership

Leadership within church organization is a very significant part which entails serious consideration. Organizations fall or rise, thrive or fail because of good or poor leadership. Dalton (2015) ascertain that leadership is significant to building sustainable organization's performance.

Church leadership training is paramount, it determines the way leaders engage in the church and society. It affects how the leader defines ethical values, true worship, and models these to their congregants and the society at large. A church leader is expected to share a message with the members that need to be remembered, exhibits a lifestyle and a faith that need to be emulated (Moss, 2014). Though society respects church leaders on assumption that they hold high moral standards and ethics that espouse biblical principles, there are leadership challenges that need to be addressed. The church leadership challenges of jealousy, politics, envy and wrangles pave way for wrong persons to get into leadership that ends up exercising too much authority that threatens the purpose of the church (Danbaba, 2016). Additionally, some church leaders have become self-centred, materially and financially minded. The church must review its role in training transformational leaders and invest more of their time and expertise in supporting a church-based training program that incorporates the leadership aspect to equip the trainees not just for growth but most importantly for idealized influence leadership in the church for them to serve and role models to be emulated (Strohbehn, 2020).

Idealized Influence and Church Leader's Performance

Idealized influence concept is the idea of leading by example. The leader's regard practices, morals and ethics to be modeled for their members to imitate (Northouse, 2018). Idealized influence leaders rely on their morals and standards that enables them to assist as examples of high moral standing and positive influence that make the leader to gain respect and trust from their members (Bayram & Dine, 2015), supported by Bass and Avolio, (2014). Northouse (2016) supports the idea that idealized influence leaders are the ones who "can be counted on to do the right thing" (p. 167). This concurs with other studies done that concluded idealized influence church leaders define high values for ethical and spiritual

performance (Averbeck, 2010; Caza & Posner, 2014; Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Formation of values is the central point that provides motivation and purpose for the congregants to follow the leader (Fernet, Trépanier, Austin, Gagné, & Forest, 2015).

The literature reviewed on corporate enterprises in Kenya showed that idealized influence contributes positively and increases performance in employees, leaders and the organization at large, but the gap that exists is if the same can be said about trained church leaders ((Aruasa & Chirchir, Chebon, 2019; Jerobon, Kimutai, & Kibet, 2016; Langat, Linge and Sikalieh, 2019), which concluded that idealized influence positively and significantly increased the performance of staff in state-owned, corporate enterprises in Kenya.

Idealized Influence enables a church leader to serve as a role model by demonstrating to the congregation an intimate relationship with God and character of integrity, transparency, and accountability. Church leaders need to have a perfect comprehension of their spiritual space and their responsibility to bring transformational change to the lives of its members (Cole, 2010). Genuine idealized influence leaders serve as examples in representing the desirable potentials they desire their members to imitate. Jesus was viewed as a role model and those He called sought to imitate Him. Paul's idealized influence was seen in the example he modeled by establishing the values and actions he desired to see in his members, he set an example that his followers considered worth imitating in 1 Corinthians 11:1; Ephesians 5:1–2; Philippians 3:17(Goodrich, 2013; Morrison, 2011). A congregation that is learning how to live in this profound way will be led by church leaders who themselves are experiencing deep and genuine transformation. This concurs with other studies done that concluded idealized influence church leaders define high values for ethical and spiritual performance (Averbeck, 2010). Formation of values is the central point that provides motivation and purpose for the congregants to follow the leader (Fernet, Trépanier, Austin, Gagné, & Forest, 2015). The church leader's intimate inner life with God is the foundation of the spiritual health of the church for it makes it possible for the leaders to serve as role models to effectively lead their congregations on the same journey of transformation (Goodrich, 2013)..

However, role modeling is not simply about members/congregation learning to mimic the behavior of the leader, but rather understanding what to follow in the role model so that the members use this knowledge when the leader is absent (Sanderse, 2013). Idealized influence leaders can only model what they have become, the change of the church leader's life is inevitable without an intimate relationship with Christ and character formation, indicators in this study that are expected to serve as a base of the church leader's performance.

Church Leader's Performance

The TCL diploma program using the Bible and other biblical related courses materials provide the content and the source for a transformational lifestyle. Thus, the teachings reveal the nature of God and enable church leaders to become like Christ by having an intimate relationship with God, and by building a godly character that can be modeled for their congregations (Foster, 2018). This is paramount for living a consistent Christian life and a demonstration of personal commitment that can be modeled. Though transformational leadership training intention was to impact idealized influence on church leader's performance (Gregory, 2019), there was no evidence that this was taking place in the 2016 and 2017 TCL diploma graduates; a gap this study intended to fill. The graduates of 2016 and 2017 were easy to trace for data obtained from them had their mobile numbers and email addresses. Since these expectation of the graduates was to be applying what they were learning while studying, they were considered to have had adequate time to implement what they learned and that the content learned was still fresh in their mind to report on.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study used pragmatism research philosophy, this approach was appropriate to efficiently answer the research questions and increase the scope of the research to balance the weaknesses of using only one approach (Creswell, 2013). The researcher adopted a mixed-method research by combining qualitative and quantitative techniques for comprehensive investigation of the research problem and conclusion of the study.

Descriptive statistics was adopted for it is preliminary for any quantitative analysis (Neuman, 2014). Using inferential statistics data from the sample in this study made inferences about the larger population from which the sample was drawn; the researcher could therefore draw conclusions and generalize them to the population. Regression analysis is an objective way to analyze data and was used to identify the relationships between independent and dependent variables (Armstrong, 2012). The regression was used to forecast the extent and effect of the church leader's influence on performance. The regression analysis helped in comprehending how much the dependent variable changes with a change in one or more independent variables. The statistical correlation report was presented in tables, figures, and words with a notation to find any significance of the variables on performance. Finally, a discussion of the results was carried out to determine if the TCL graduates idealized influence the church performance in spiritual numerical, economic, and social growth.

Summary Study Findings

The study findings provide strong evidence that TCL positively influences the church leader's performance within selected churches in Kenya. The purpose of the study was to establish the influence of transformational leadership training and church leader's performance in Kenya focusing on Pan Africa Christian University Diploma Program, following the research questions: To what extent does idealized influence TCL graduates on church performance in Kenya?

Table 1.1. TCL Graduates/Church Leader's Idealized Influence

	SD	D	NA	A		SA	Mean	STDev
Sharing and modelling values and beliefs	2(1.3%)	1(0.6%)	5(3.1%)	68(42.8%)		83(52.2%	4.44	0.708
Importance of intimate relationship with God	3(1.9%	0(0%)	0(0%)	16(10%)		140(88.1%)	4.824	0.611
Integrity	2(1.3%)	6(3.8%)	14(8.7%)	66(41.5%)		71(44.7%)	4.591	0.668
Accountable to God's mission	3(1.9%)	1(0.6%)	6(3.8%)	68(42.8%)		81(50.9)	4.245	0.862
Making moral and ethical decisions	13(8.1%)	14(8.8%)	20(12.6%)	79(49.7%)		33(20.8%)	4.402	0.764
Building respect and trust	0(0%)	2(1.3%)	2(1.3%)	50(31.4%)		105(66%)	4.623	0.581
Open association with members	13(8.1%)	14(8.8%)	20(12.6%)	79(49.7%)		33(20.8%)	3.66	1.146
Composite mean							4.39	0.762

Based on the study findings in Table 4.1, the TCL graduates respondents accepted that they were competent to share and exemplify the most important values and beliefs with the members, scoring a mean of 4.44 with a standard deviation of 0.71. They specified the importance of having an intimate relationship with God by spending time reading God's Word and prayer where the indicator had a score of 4.82 with a standard deviation of 0.61. Exhibiting a life of integrity where words are consistent with actions had a mean of 4.59 with a standard deviation of 0.67. The majority 93.7% agreed that they were accountable to God's mission by mean score of 4.24, and standard deviation of 0.86. Respondents indicated that they make moral and ethical decision by a mean score of 4.40 and standard deviation of 0.76. The respondents further agreed that they act in ways that build respect and provide complete trust by a mean score of 4.62 and standard deviation of 0.58 and associating openly with members by a mean score of 3.66 with a standard deviation of 1.15.

The findings from the respondents above suggests that idealized influence was highly practiced and modelled by graduates/church leaders. There was a consensus across the respondent groups that church leaders practiced and modelled idealized influence for their members to emulate which contributed to their great performance. This means that majority of the respondents of the TCL graduates gained Christian disciplines, values, morals and character formation as they studied and were able to model the same and in turn, church members benefited more from the leader's practice of idealized influence.

Views on the perception of church members on church leader's idealized influence were presented for scoring. The findings are indicated in Table 4.2.

Table 1.2. Perception of Church Members/Congregates on Church leader's Idealized Influence

	N	A	SA	Mean	STDev
Sharing and modelling values and beliefs	0(0%)	28(48%)	30(52%)	4.52	0.504
Integrity	0(0%)	33(57%)	25(43%)	4.43	0.500
Accountable to God's mission and Making moral and ethical decisions	5(9%)	25(43%)	28(48%)	4.40	0.647
Building respect and trust	0(0%)	25(43%)	33(57%	4.57	0.500
Composite Mean				4.48	0.537

The study data in Table 4.2 pointed out that church leaders shared and modelled Christian values and beliefs for members to emulate as shown by a mean of 4.52 and standard deviation of 0.50. The members indicated that the leaders live with integrity by being truthful, trusted, and consistent in actions and words as shown by a mean score of 4.40 with standard deviation of 0.50. Leaders are said to be accountable to God's mission, make moral and ethical decisions by mean score of 4.40 with standard deviation of 0.65. The respondents

agreed that leaders build respect and trust as illustrated by a mean score of 4.57 with standard deviation of 0.50.

The study established that idealized influence was responsible for 28% of the variation in graduates respondent's score on church leaders' performance with a correlation coefficient of 0.58 that is positively significant. Graduates/church leaders are able to learn, share and model godly values, beliefs and Christian disciplines (Shanlian, 2013). This is supported by Bayram and Dine, (2015), who indicated that the practice of leaders idealized influence is determined on their beliefs and character to function as examples which result to great performance.

The findings indicates that church members believed graduates/church leaders' idealized influence is responsible for 8% a weak but positive correlation of the variation in the respondents scores of leaders' performance. Members/congregations agreed that graduates/church leaders share and model godly values and Christian disciplines and character that they had learned for them to imitate, supported by Shadraconis (2013). They strongly agreed that the leader's lives were above reproach, with integrity – being truthful, trusted, and consistent in actions and words as a result of the training, which served as a basis of their followership. In agreement Goodrich, 2013 ascertain that members will constantly be watching the leaders to show the way both in word and deed, as Apostle Paul also encouraged the believers in Philippi to 'imitate him as he imitates Christ' (Phil. 3:17). Supported by leadership training research by Barling et al., (1996) cited by Hamdani, (2018), stated that transformational leadership skills can be learned and developed through training programs. Additionally, leaders can enhance their skills on setting good examples. Trained transformational church leaders not only contribute to organizational effectiveness, but also stir the members towards the same.

Interview results from senior church leaders showed that leadership by example was an overriding element in the practice of idealized influence of a church leader. Most of the respondents observed that greater impact accrues to church performance when the church leadership leads from the front by modeling. This was well captured in the perspective of – KII-3; "When the church leadership leads from the front

…church performance is realized." KII-4. "When leaders model Christian disciplines, beliefs and values before the congregation…results to close relationship with God as they emulate their leaders" KII-6. By implication, this means that the commitment of church leaders to role modelling of Christian disciplines, beliefs, and values that are acquired through the training is key to church performance. This finding agrees with the results of a study by Caza and Posner, (2014) who stated that leaders set the example through practicing Christian disciples, beliefs and values they preach. In agreement Goodrich states that, the church leader's role is to display a biblical pattern for the members, for the members will keep watching the leaders to show the way both in word and deed (Goodrich, 2013). The finding also concurs with the results of a previous study by Middleton, Harvey, and Esaki, (2015), which revealed that transformational leaders saw themselves as role models for the actions and behaviors espoused by the organization.

The results of this research indicated that the transformational church leader performed extraordinarily in their organizations. The church leader's performance composite mean score rating by TCL graduates was (Mean=4.27) mean score by members/congregants (Mean=3.74), these suggests both TCL graduates and church members/congregants respondents agreed that church leader's performance increased as they practiced idealized influence. This means that graduates/church leader's training and practice of idealized influence, served as role model for the members/congregation and contributed to the performance (growth) of the church spiritually, economically, socially and numerically. Supported with Awori, (2017) findings that stated that leaders who used idealized influence by being role models ethical and moral conducts were trusted, and respected by their followers and they achieved positive performance.

Correlation Analysis

The researcher conducted a Pearson correlation analysis to determine the relationship between the study variables as reported by the TCL graduates/church leaders and influence on church performance. The findings are indicated in subsequent sections.

Table 1.3. Pearson Correlation Analysis as Reported by the Graduates

		Performance of church leaders		Leaders Idealized influence
Performance of church leaders	Pearson Correlation Sig.(2-tailed)N			1
				159
Leaders idealized influence	Pearson Correlation		.527**	1
	Sig.(2-tailed)N		0	
			159	
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).				

Huber (2004) held that in the interpretation of results for the linear relationships in the study, for a weak correlation, "r" ranges from ± 0.10 to ± 0.29; in a moderate correlation, "r" ranges between ±0.30 and ±0.49; while in a strong correlation, "r" ranges from ±0.5 and ± 0.9.

The objective of the study was to examine the impact of idealized influence among TCL graduates on church performance in Kenya. Pearson's rank correlation analysis was run to test the strength of the relationship between these variables using the composite score of idealized influence and leader performance composite score. Table 4.18 presents the correlation coefficients at $p<.01$. The findings show that leader's idealized influence has a strong significant positive correlation ($r = .527$, $p < .01$, N = 159). The coefficient of determination was ($r^2 = .28.1$), indicating that idealized influence is responsible for 28% of the variation in the respondents score of leaders performance, meaning 72% of leadership performance is explained by other factors.

Corroboration of the church leader's performance was found in the results of all key informant interviews which linked church leadership performance to the numeric, social, economic and spiritual growth of the church. Spiritually, there is an increase in devotion to prayer, study of God's word, and fellowship, growth in cell groups now that we have leaders capable of handling the spiritual aspect of the members in sharing the word. The interviews confirmed that numerically, the church attendance has increased, and new churches have been opened. Social improvement, members care for each other. Church finances have improved which facilitates the support of the pastors and the organization at large, and outreach to the community. This implies that the TCL program is making an impact in the churches that have embraced it as a training tool for their church leaders.

Idealized influence church leader plays a key role in determining whether the church performs (grows), while he/she remains involved throughout the initiation, implementation, and sustainability of the spiritual, social, economic and numerical growth of the church. Findings from this study may influence leadership training and provide a framework for churches who wish to help to meet their spiritual, numerical, social and economic growth.

This study findings validated the facts that transformational church leadership training of PAC University contributes to church and organizational performance, which in this study, was church growth. There is strong evidence in this study that trained church leaders influence performance through idealized influence.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that churches should use PAC University TCL program to train leaders in idealized influence for modelling of Christian values, disciplines and character to enhance church performance. Supported by the finding that showed graduates were responsible for 28% of the variation in respondent's score of leaders' performance.

Graduates church leaders are able to share and model the most important values and beliefs that resulted to high performance.

Recommendation for additional supplementary teaching to enhance the transformational church leadership training. In this regard, training the youth for leadership is a necessity, from the research demographic data, most of the respondents are from 35 years and above, leaving the youth who are the majority in the churches out. The church need to encourage the youth for church leadership training. Data was collected during the COVID 19 period which made most respondents realize a gap in the training on relevant practical courses to address issues of online church, family and counseling (KII-3, KII-4, and KII-6). One of the respondent admitted "I can account for my members, I don't know where to find them since the closer of church services" KII-6. Recommend seminars to deal with this gap.

Finally, the study recommends a revamp of seminar leaders (TCL program facilitators) for they are key to transformation in the TCL program, the quality of seminar leader's matters; hence, there is need for revamp. Supported by Mwambazambi, and Banza, (2014) who state that seminar leaders are essential contributors to the real transformation being directly involved in the development of leaders as they facilitate the application of the teaching. Their prior transformation of beliefs, values and character plays a key role in the transformation and the necessary development of those they train.

V. CONCLUSION

The study findings show that trained transformational church leaders who practice idealized influence are able to share and model the godly values, beliefs and Christian disciplines. Church leaders stipulates the significance of having an intimate connection with God by spending time studying God's Word and daily prayer. Church members believed that their church leader share and model the Christian beliefs as examples to be copies; where the leader is obedient to God's inspired word, lives a life that is above reproach, and a life of integrity; being truthful, trusted, and consistent in action and word.

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