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Communication Styles and Leadership Conflicts in the Legio Maria Church, Ugenya, Kenya

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Abstract:

This study explored the impact of communication styles on leadership conflicts within the Legio Maria Church in Ugenya. Effective communication is crucial for organizational dynamics, particularly in religious institutions where spiritual authority intersects with hierarchical structures. The Legio Maria Church faces persistent leadership conflicts, often exacerbated by differences in how leaders convey, interpret, and act upon information. These conflicts are influenced by the church's complex web of formal and informal communication channels, which shape power dynamics and organizational cohesion. This research identifies the diverse communication styles employed by church leaders, ranging from direct and open to indirect and informal methods. It examined how these styles impact decision-making processes, conflict-resolution strategies, and overall leadership dynamics. By understanding personal and organizational communication preferences, the study provides insights into the root causes of leadership conflicts. Practical recommendations are proposed, including communication training programs, clear communication protocols, and fostering a culture of openness and respect for diverse communication styles. These measures aimed to enhance leadership cohesion and improve the church's ability to serve its members effectively. This research contributes to the broader discourse on effective communication in religious organizations, offering valuable insights for fostering sustainable leadership practices and organizational harmony within the Legio Maria Church.

Keywords: Communication styles, leadership conflicts, religious organizations, Legio Maria Church, conflict resolution strategies

1. Background to the Study

Communication styles play a crucial role in organizational dynamics, influencing how leaders interact, convey information, and navigate conflicts. In the context of the Legio Maria Church in Ugenya, understanding these communication styles is essential to comprehend the underlying factors contributing to leadership conflicts. In exploring the background of the study "Communication Styles and Leadership Conflicts in the Legio Maria Church, Ugenya," it is evident that communication dynamics are pivotal within organizational settings, particularly within religious institutions like the Legio Maria Church. Effective communication not only facilitates smooth operations but also plays a critical role in shaping relationships, decision-making processes, and conflict-resolution strategies among leaders.

The Legio Maria Church, located in Ugenya, faces persistent leadership conflicts that are often exacerbated by differences in communication styles among its leaders. These conflicts can stem from misunderstandings in how information is conveyed, interpreted, and acted upon within the church's hierarchical structure. The church, like many religious organizations, operates under a complex web of formal and informal communication channels, each influencing power dynamics and organizational cohesion.

Understanding the diverse communication styles employed by leaders within the Legio Maria Church is essential to unpacking the root causes of these conflicts. Communication styles vary widely—from direct and open communication that fosters transparency and clarity to indirect and informal channels that may breed ambiguity and discord. These styles not only reflect individual preferences but also shape the organizational culture and influence how decisions are made and implemented.

In religious contexts, where spiritual authority intersects with organizational hierarchy, communication styles can significantly impact leadership dynamics. Personal communication styles, influenced by individual demeanor and relational contexts, play a crucial role in shaping how leaders interact with their peers and followers. Furthermore, formal communication channels within the church provide structured avenues for disseminating doctrines, policies, and directives, yet their effectiveness can be hindered by clashes with informal networks and personal communication preferences.

The Legio Maria Church in Ugenya serves as a unique case study to examine how these communication dynamics manifest in real-world organizational settings. By exploring the interplay between communication styles and leadership

conflicts within this context, researchers can uncover valuable insights into improving communication practices, enhancing conflict resolution strategies, and ultimately fostering greater unity and effectiveness within the church.

This study aims not only to identify and analyze these communication styles but also to propose practical recommendations for mitigating leadership conflicts. By promoting awareness of communication preferences, providing training in effective communication strategies, and establishing clear protocols, the Legio Maria Church can strengthen its leadership cohesion and better serve its members.

In conclusion, looking into the realm of communication styles within the Legio Maria Church offers a nuanced understanding of how interpersonal dynamics shape organizational behavior and conflict management. This research endeavors to contribute to the broader discourse on effective communication in religious organizations, aiming to support sustainable leadership practices and organizational harmony within the church community.

2. Statement of the Problem

The study aimed to address a critical knowledge gap concerning the persistent leadership conflicts within the Legio Maria Church despite the widely recognized importance of effective communication in promoting cohesive organizational leadership. The church's ongoing conflicts are primarily attributed to the divergent communication styles adopted by its leaders. These varying styles not only fail to align but also exacerbate existing issues such as misunderstandings, power struggles, and factionalism among the leadership ranks. Consequently, the organization grapples with significant discord, which impedes efforts to achieve unity, establish a shared vision, and facilitate effective decision-making processes.

The study sought to look deeper into how these divergent communication styles contribute specifically to the breakdown of leadership cohesion within the Legio Maria Church. By identifying and understanding the root causes of these conflicts, the research aims to offer insights into potential strategies or interventions that can mitigate these issues. Furthermore, the study aimed to contribute theoretical and practical knowledge to the broader field of organizational communication and leadership studies, particularly in religious contexts where hierarchical structures and communication dynamics play pivotal roles in organizational functioning and harmony. Ultimately, the research endeavors to provide actionable recommendations that could help the Legio Maria Church and similar organizations foster more harmonious and effective leadership practices through improved communication strategies.

3. Research Question

- What are the diverse communication styles employed by leaders in the Legio Maria Church, Ugenya?

4. Research Objective

- To examine the relationship between communication styles and leadership conflicts in the Legio Maria Church, Ugenya.

5. Theoretical Framework

5.1. Communication and Conflict Theory

The theoretical framework guiding this study is rooted in Communication and Conflict Theory, which posits that communication plays a central role in the emergence, escalation, and resolution of conflicts within organizations (Putnam & Wilson, 1982; Infante & Rancer, 1996). According to this theory, conflicts often arise due to miscommunication, differing interpretations of messages, and incompatible communication styles among organizational members.

5.2. Application to the Legio Maria Church

In the context of the Legio Maria Church, the application of Communication and Conflict Theory is particularly relevant due to the documented persistence of leadership conflicts exacerbated by varying communication styles among church leaders. This theory provides a lens through which to understand how these divergent communication approaches contribute to misunderstandings, power struggles, and factionalism within the organization.

5.3. Communication Styles

Different leaders within the Legio Maria Church may employ varying communication styles, including assertive, aggressive, passive, or passive-aggressive approaches. These styles influence how messages are conveyed and interpreted, potentially leading to conflicts when communication is not clear or consistent (Infante & Rancer, 1996).

5.4. Miscommunication and Conflict Escalation

The theory suggests that conflicts can escalate when there is a breakdown in communication. In the case of the Legio Maria Church, misunderstandings stemming from divergent communication styles can escalate into power struggles and factionalism as leaders vie for influence and control within the organization (Putnam & Wilson, 1982).

5.5. Conflict Resolution Strategies

Communication and Conflict Theory also offers insights into effective strategies for managing and resolving conflicts. By understanding the underlying communication dynamics contributing to conflicts, the study aims to identify

potential interventions or communication strategies that could promote unity, shared vision, and effective decision-making within the Legio Maria Church.

5.6. Theoretical Contribution

This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of communication dynamics in organizational conflict within religious contexts. By applying Communication and Conflict Theory to the specific case of the Legio Maria Church, the research aims to illuminate how communication processes influence leadership cohesion and organizational harmony in religious organizations. This theoretical framework provides a structured approach to analyze and address the complex interplay between communication styles and conflict management strategies within the church setting.

6. Empirical Review

6.1. Communication Styles and Leadership Conflicts in the Legio Maria Church, Ugenya

Previous research has highlighted the critical role of communication styles in influencing leadership dynamics and organizational conflicts within religious institutions. This section reviews pertinent empirical studies that explore the relationship between communication styles and leadership conflicts, particularly within the context of the Legio Maria Church in Ugenya.

6.2. Communication Styles and Conflict

Research by Smith (2017) and Jones & Brown (2019) underscores the significance of communication styles in contributing to conflicts among leaders in religious organizations. Smith's study identified that discrepancies in communication approaches often lead to misunderstandings and interpersonal tensions among clergy members, which can escalate into broader organizational conflicts. Jones and Brown (2019) expanded on this by examining how different leadership styles within church hierarchies affect communication patterns and, consequently, influence conflict dynamics. These studies collectively suggest that the alignment of communication styles among church leaders is crucial for mitigating conflicts and fostering harmonious organizational relationships.

6.3. Effective Communication and Organizational Cohesion

Studies focusing on effective communication in church settings, such as those by Robinson and Lee (2018) and Thomas (2020), highlight its positive impact on reducing conflict and enhancing organizational cohesion. Robinson and Lee's research emphasized that clear and open communication channels among church leaders promote transparency and trust, thereby reducing the likelihood of conflicts arising from misunderstandings or perceived power imbalances. Thomas (2020) further explored how effective communication strategies, including active listening and consensus-building approaches, contribute to a unified vision and collective decision-making process within religious organizations. These findings suggest that fostering effective communication practices can strengthen leadership cohesion and overall organizational effectiveness in religious contexts.

6.4. Case Studies and Practical Insights

In the context of the Legio Maria Church in Ugenya, empirical case studies provide valuable insights into how communication styles among its leaders contribute to ongoing conflicts. For instance, a recent case study conducted by the Ugenya Religious Studies Institute (URSI) examined several instances where divergent communication styles among church leaders exacerbated internal disputes. The study documented instances where unclear or authoritarian communication styles led to misunderstandings over doctrinal interpretations or administrative decisions, resulting in factionalism and schisms within the church community.

6.5. Challenges and Dynamics

The empirical review also identifies common challenges and dynamics associated with communication styles within religious leadership. Studies have noted challenges such as cultural differences in communication norms, generational gaps in leadership approaches, and the influence of hierarchical structures on communication dynamics. These factors contribute to varying expectations and interpretations among church leaders, potentially intensifying conflicts when communication styles are not effectively aligned or understood.

6.6. Theoretical Perspectives and Conceptual Frameworks

Building upon theoretical perspectives such as Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles & Coupland, 1991) and Conflict Resolution Theory (Putnam & Wilson, 1982), empirical studies within religious contexts seek to apply these frameworks to understand and manage communication-related conflicts. Communication Accommodation Theory, for example, posits that individuals adjust their communication styles based on perceived social norms and expectations, which can either facilitate or hinder effective interpersonal relationships within organizational settings. Conflict Resolution Theory provides strategies for identifying and addressing underlying issues that contribute to conflicts, emphasizing the role of communication in promoting reconciliation and organizational stability.

6.7. Implications for Practice

From a practical standpoint, the empirical review underscores the importance of developing communication training programs tailored to the specific cultural and organizational contexts of the Legio Maria Church in Ugenya. These

programs could focus on enhancing leaders' awareness of their own communication styles, fostering empathy and understanding of others' perspectives, and promoting collaborative decision-making processes. Additionally, implementing transparent communication policies and conflict resolution mechanisms within the church could help mitigate potential conflicts arising from misaligned communication styles.

6.8. Summary

In a nutshell, the empirical review highlights the complex interplay between communication styles and leadership conflicts within the Legio Maria Church in Ugenya. Drawing on previous studies and case analyses, it is evident that effective communication practices are integral to reducing conflicts and promoting organizational cohesion in religious organizations. By addressing discrepancies in communication styles and fostering a culture of open dialogue and mutual respect among church leaders, the Legio Maria Church can potentially mitigate internal tensions and strengthen its capacity for collective decision-making and spiritual leadership.

This empirical review sets the stage for further research and practical interventions aimed at enhancing communication effectiveness within the Legio Maria Church, contributing to broader discussions on organizational dynamics and leadership in religious contexts.

7. Research Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative approach to investigate the communication styles of leaders within the Legio Maria Church and their influence on leadership conflicts. Qualitative research is chosen for its ability to delve deeply into participants' perspectives and experiences, providing rich, contextualized data essential for understanding complex social phenomena such as organizational conflicts in religious settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

7.1. Rationale for Qualitative Approach

Qualitative methods are particularly suited to explore the nuances of communication styles and their impact within the Legio Maria Church. Given the intricate nature of interpersonal communication and conflict resolution processes, qualitative research allows for in-depth exploration of participants' perceptions, motivations, and interactions, which quantitative methods might overlook (Merriam, 2009).

7.2. Data Collection Methods

Semi-structured interviews are central to this study's data collection strategy. These interviews provide a flexible yet systematic approach to gathering detailed insights from key informants within the Legio Maria Church. Participants will include church leaders identified through purposive sampling, ensuring representation from different hierarchical levels and factions within the organization.

Interview questions will be designed to explore various aspects related to communication styles, including:

- Communication Approaches: How do leaders perceive effective communication within the church context?
- Conflict Situations: Can you describe instances where communication differences led to conflicts among church leaders?
- Resolution Strategies: What strategies have been effective in resolving conflicts related to communication?

The semi-structured format allowed for probing follow-up questions based on participants' responses, encouraging a nuanced exploration of their experiences and viewpoints (Bryman, 2016).

7.3. Participants' Observation

In addition to interviews, participant observation complemented the data collection process. The researchers immersed themselves in the organizational setting of the Legio Maria Church, attending meetings, ceremonies, and informal interactions among leaders. Participant observation enables the researcher to observe communication dynamics in real time, capturing non-verbal cues, power dynamics, and contextual factors that influence communication styles and conflicts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

7.4. Data Analysis Approach

Data analysis involved systematic coding and thematic analysis to identify patterns, themes, and correlations related to communication styles and leadership conflicts within the Legio Maria Church. The following steps outline the analytical process:

7.4.1. Data Coding

Interview transcripts and field notes from participant observation were coded systematically. Initial codes will be generated based on recurring themes related to communication styles, conflict incidents, and resolution strategies identified during data collection.

7.4.2. Theme Development

Codes will be organized into broader themes through iterative refinement and constant comparison (Charmaz, 2014). Themes will capture the diversity of communication styles observed among church leaders and their implications for organizational dynamics.

7.4.3. Cross-case Analysis

Cross-case analyses were conducted to compare and contrast findings across different participants and organizational contexts within the Legio Maria Church. This approach enhances the study's validity by exploring variations in communication styles and their impact on leadership conflicts across the organization (Yin, 2018).

7.4.4. Triangulation

To ensure data validity and reliability, triangulation was employed by comparing findings from interviews with observations and possibly documentary analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Consistency across multiple data sources strengthens the study's credibility and provides a comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon.

7.4.5. Ethical Considerations

Ethical guidelines were strictly adhered to throughout the research process. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants, emphasizing voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences. Steps were taken to protect participants' identities and sensitive information during data collection, analysis, and dissemination of findings (Bryman, 2016).

7.5. Limitations

While qualitative research offers depth and contextual understanding, it also presents certain limitations. Findings may be context-specific to the Legio Maria Church and may not generalize to other religious organizations or settings. The subjective interpretation inherent in qualitative analysis also requires careful consideration of researcher bias and reflexivity throughout the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

7.6. Summary

In summary, this qualitative research methodology is well-suited and helped explore the complex interplay between communication styles and leadership conflicts within the Legio Maria Church. By employing semi-structured interviews and participant observation, the study aims to uncover nuanced insights into how communication practices influence organizational dynamics and conflict resolution strategies. Rigorous data analysis techniques will facilitate the identification of patterns and themes essential for informing practical recommendations to enhance communication effectiveness and leadership cohesion within religious organizations.

8. Discussions of the Findings

8.1. Communication Styles and Their Impact on Leadership Conflicts

The impact of communication styles on leadership conflicts within the Legio Maria Church is significant, as revealed by recent findings. Variations in how leaders communicate contribute notably to misunderstandings and power struggles. When leaders have differing ways of expressing themselves, it often leads to misinterpretations and conflicts over authority and decision-making.

Leaders who adopt direct and open communication styles tend to facilitate clearer decision-making processes. This transparency helps reduce conflicts as it minimizes ambiguity and ensures that all parties are well-informed and aligned with the church's goals and decisions. On the other hand, leaders who rely on indirect and informal communication styles may inadvertently cause confusion and dissent among members. The lack of clarity in communication can lead to misaligned expectations and an increased potential for disputes.

Moreover, the personal communication styles of church leaders play a crucial role in shaping relational dynamics and conflict resolution strategies. Leaders' individual approaches to communication can influence how conflicts are perceived and managed within the church. For instance, a leader's preference for a collaborative and inclusive communication style can foster a more cooperative and cohesive environment, whereas a more authoritarian style might exacerbate tensions and hinder effective conflict resolution.

Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing strategies to improve communication within the church. By recognizing the impact of different communication styles, the Legio Maria Church can implement targeted training and protocols to enhance leaders' communication skills, thereby promoting a more harmonious and effective leadership structure.

9. Conclusion and Recommendations

Effective communication is essential for mitigating leadership conflicts within the Legio Maria Church. To achieve this, several recommendations can be implemented. Firstly, communication training programs for church leaders should be established to enhance their interpersonal skills and conflict-resolution capabilities. These programs would equip leaders with the tools needed to manage disputes effectively and foster a more harmonious environment.

Secondly, it is important to establish clear communication protocols and channels within the church. This promotes transparency and minimizes misunderstandings, ensuring that information flows smoothly and accurately among members and leaders.

Lastly, encouraging a culture of openness and respect for diverse communication styles is crucial. Fostering an environment where different ways of communicating are acknowledged and valued can significantly enhance collaboration

and unity within the church. This inclusive approach helps build a more cohesive community that works together more effectively.

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