

Impact of Cultural Biases on Leadership Dispositions among the Youth of Adventist Church in the Techiman Municipality, Bono East Region, Ghana, West Africa

Edward Nyarkoh*

Theological Seminary, Adventist University of Africa

*Corresponding Author

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the cultural biases influencing leadership dispositions among youth in the Seventh-day Adventist Church of the Techiman Municipality Bono East Region, Ghana, West Africa. The study aimed to examine prevalent cultural biases shaping leadership perceptions and investigate the impact of these cultural biases on leadership dispositions within the community. The study was quantitative based on the explanatory research design. The study was conducted among the leadership and youth of the Adventists churches in Techiman Central, Amo Memorial Seventh-day Adventist Church (AMSDA), Forikrom Central, and Bamiri churches. A total of 400 respondents were considered for the study. The analysis revealed that age-related biases, perceived competence, and power dynamics significantly shaped leadership perceptions among the youth in the Adventist Church. The study also demonstrated that cultural biases significantly influence youth leadership dispositions, with hierarchical power distance being the most impactful factor, followed by perceived competence. The study recommends that the church implements training and awareness programs to challenge and change entrenched biases about age and competence. Facilitating open dialogues and workshops on inclusivity and fairness can help mitigate the effects of power distance and in-group favouritism.

Keyword: Adventist Youth, Youth leadership, Cultural biases, Seventh-day Adventist Church, Church leadership.

INTRODUCTION

In this contemporary age, where religious organizations grapple with multifaceted challenges, leadership within the church has evolved (Alio et al., 2019). Alongside traditional theological education, leadership has emerged as a key component in equipping the youth with the skills and knowledge needed to navigate the complexities of the modern world. As indicated by Jenssen (2020), leadership goes beyond spiritual guidance; it encompasses organizational management, communication skills, and strategies for engaging with an increasingly diverse and dynamic congregation. The social relevance of the impact of cultural biases on leadership disposition among the youth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is multifaceted and, significantly, in the context of how young individuals grow, engage and take on leadership roles within the church and broader community. Addressing these biases allows more inclusive environment that encourages young people to step into leadership positions, regardless of their cultural background.

There exist in Ghana a growing body of literature on leadership and cultural influences. However, there remains a striking gap in understanding how cultural biases specifically affect youth leadership dispositions in Seventh-day Adventist communities in Ghana. In recent times, some studies (e.g., Osei, 2017; Bediako, 2019) explored the issue of leadership in Ghanaian churches. Unfortunately, most of these studies focus on adult leadership structures, leaving youth leadership dynamics unexplored. This study seeks to bridge this research gap by examining the extent to which cultural biases influence youth leadership within the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Techiman municipality. By addressing this gap, the study will contribute to the broader discourse

on leadership development, cultural adaptation in faith-based organizations, and the role of youth in church sustainability. The research gap on the impact of cultural biases on leadership disposition among the youth of the Adventist Church can be identified in several key areas. Overall, the research gap revolves around a lack of focused studies that addresses how cultural biases specifically influence the leadership development of youth within the Adventist church, both from the perspective of the youth themselves and the church leadership structure. Research in this area could lead to a deeper understanding of how to create more inclusive cultural sensitivity leadership training and mentorship programs that reflect the diverse nature of the global Seventh-day Adventist community.

To effectively support and nurture the development of Adventist youth as future leaders, it is imperative to gain a comprehensive understanding of the context in which they operate. The Techiman Municipality, represents a unique setting with its own socio-cultural, economic, and educational dynamics. The area is characterized by its diverse demographic composition, including a sizable youth population. Identifying the cultural biases influencing leadership disposition among the youth is instrumental in tailoring youth development strategies. This research therefore seeks to evaluate and assess the cultural biases influencing leadership disposition among the youth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Techiman Municipality, Bono East Region of Ghana, West Africa. The study seeks to (1) examine the prevalent cultural biases that shape perceptions of leadership among the youth of Adventist Church in the Techiman Municipality, and (2) to investigate the impact of cultural biases on leadership dispositions among the youth of Adventist Church in the Techiman Municipality.

Cultural Biases and Religious Leadership

Cultural bias refers to the systematic and often unconscious favouritism or prejudice towards certain cultures, traditions, or social groups over others (Mockaitis, 2015). This pervasive phenomenon influences perceptions, judgments, and decision-making processes across various aspects of human interaction. As stated by Payne et al. (2017), cultural bias exerts a profound influence on the disposition of individuals in leadership roles, shaping perceptions, expectations, and behaviours. According to Elana et al. (2019), cultural bias on leadership disposition occurs when individuals' attitudes, expectations, and judgments about leadership are influenced by their cultural background. This bias can affect how leadership qualities are perceived, the expectations placed on leaders, and the opportunities afforded to individuals based on cultural norms and values. For instance, leaders from certain cultural backgrounds or age group may be automatically associated with positive qualities such as decisiveness, authority, or strategic thinking.

According to the Social Identity Theory, individuals mostly categorize themselves and others into social groups, impacting their sense of self and influencing behaviours Payne et al. (2017). This concept emanates into power distance where individuals within a society accept and expect unequal distribution of power. In high power distance cultures, the concept of power is deeply ingrained, leading to a clear expectation of hierarchical leadership structures Elana et al. (2019). Members of specific cultural or social groups are more inclined to view leaders from their own group as authoritative or competent. In addition, shared cultural affiliations create a sense of familiarity and trust, leading to the expectation that individuals from within the group possess inherent leadership qualities (Alomair, 2016). This phenomenon can extend beyond the immediate cultural context, impacting how leaders are perceived by external observers who may rely on cultural stereotypes and preconceived notions when evaluating leadership capabilities.

In the context of youth leadership within the church, the interplay between power distance and leadership dynamics significantly influences how individuals, particularly the youth, perceive and engage in leadership roles. In most religious traditions, there is a clear expectation of hierarchical leadership, with established authoritative figures leading and making decisions (Gagauz & Chivaciuc, 2021). The youth within these contexts may perceive leadership as inherently hierarchical, expecting clear guidance from more senior members of the church. This expectation aligns with the traditional power structures commonly found in religious institutions, where clergy and older members often hold positions of authority. According to Salami & Ufoma, (2016), hierarchical oversight may undermine the confidence of youth leaders, making them hesitant to take initiative or exercise leadership. The lack of empowerment can lead to a generation of youth leaders who feel undervalued and disheartened, potentially causing them to disengage from leadership roles or even from

the church community altogether. Thus, cultural biases could result in leadership dispositions of individuals and more specifically, the youth.

As the Biblical text from 1 Timothy 4:12 (NIV) reiterates “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity”, the Seventh-day Adventist Church recognizes that the youth are not merely that of passive observers but active participants and potential leaders. Biblically, Jesus’ teaching on humility and childlike faith as indicated in Matthew 18:4, implies that the church should not overlook the contributions and potential leadership of its younger members. Cultural bias not only impedes effective collaboration but also places limitations on the potential growth of the younger leaders within the church. The dismissive attitude towards the abilities of youth pastors and the resistance to acknowledging their spiritual authority create a challenging environment for these younger pastors (Muthuku et al., 2023). As a consequence, the church faces the risk of underutilizing the fresh energy and innovative ideas that the younger leaders bring to the table.

Biblical Perspectives on Leadership

Biblical perspectives on youth leadership provide a rich foundation for understanding the role of young individuals in guiding and contributing to the community, especially within the context of the church. Several biblical passages offer insights and principles that shape how youth leadership is viewed from a theological standpoint.

Timothy 4:12 (NIV): “*Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity.*” The verse carries a profound theological message that transcends societal expectations and challenges the limitations often imposed by age in the realm of Christian leadership. In this communication from the Apostle Paul to Timothy, a powerful encouragement is extended to young believers, urging them not to allow their youth to hinder their impact and effectiveness within the Christian community. The theological insight encapsulated in this verse is transformative, breaking away from conventional norms that tend to underestimate the capabilities of the young and instead inviting them to embrace their potential as leaders.

This biblical passage challenges preconceived notions by emphasizing the imperative for young individuals to “set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity.” Here, a framework for leadership is established, one that is deeply rooted in virtues reflective of Christian character. The theological insight goes beyond the mere acknowledgment of youth as a chronological factor and delves into the qualities that can shape effective leadership. It challenges stereotypes surrounding youth and leadership, asserting that the young possess the inherent capacity to exemplify virtues fundamental to Christian living.

1 Peter 5:2-3 (NIV): “*Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them, not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.*” This verse from 1 Peter 5:2-3 encapsulates a transformative theological perspective on leadership within a Christian context. It portrays leadership as a role of shepherding, emphasizing willingness, service, and exemplary behaviour. The verse underscores the idea of leadership as service, echoing the concept of servant leadership. Leaders are encouraged to watch over and care for their flock not out of obligation but willingly, reflecting a transformative shift from authoritative leadership to a humble and service-oriented approach.

The rejection of pursuing dishonest gain challenges worldly and unethical leadership practices. The transformative theological perspective asserts that Christian leadership should be characterized by integrity and a commitment to ethical conduct, setting it apart from self-serving leadership models. The call to be examples to the flock emphasizes the transformative power of leadership through personal conduct.

Cultural Biases and Youth Leadership from a Biblical Perspective

Galatians 3:28 (NIV): “*There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*” The verse explicitly declares that in Christ, there is no distinction based on cultural, social, or gender differences. This challenges any cultural biases that may hinder the recognition of the

capabilities of young leaders based on their cultural background. It promotes a view that in the realm of Christian leadership, all individuals, regardless of their cultural context, are equal and valued.

The verse directly confronts the cultural divide between Jew and Gentile, highlighting the significance of unity among believers. In the realm of youth leadership, it encourages a mindset that transcends cultural barriers and biases. By recognizing the unity shared in Christ, this principle challenges any cultural prejudices that might influence the perception of young leaders based on their cultural background. It promotes an inclusive environment that values the contributions of youth from diverse cultural contexts, fostering a sense of unity within the community. The mention of neither slave nor free addresses social hierarchies and challenges biases related to social status. Applied to youth leadership, this principle challenges societal perceptions that may underestimate the capabilities of the young based on their social roles. It underscores the equality of potential in Christ, emphasizing that irrespective of societal roles, every individual, including young leaders, has equal worth and potential.

1 Corinthians 12:14-22 (NIV): *“Now the body is not made up of one part but of many... But God has put the body together, giving greater honour to the parts that lacked it.”* This statement underscores the diversity present within the Christian community. Just as a human body is composed of various parts, each with its unique function, the body of Christ is comprised of individuals with different gifts, talents, and roles. In the context of youth leadership, this highlights the need for a variety of perspectives and contributions from individuals of all ages, including the youth. God’s intentional design of the body, with each part having a specific role, emphasizes the value and importance of every member. In the context of cultural biases on youth leadership, this challenges any tendency to underestimate or devalue the contributions of the youth based on age or cultural background. God’s design grants honour to every part, regardless of perceived significance.

The metaphor of the body of Christ, as presented in 1 Corinthians 12:14-22, stands as a compelling call for inclusivity within the Christian community. It emphasizes that every member, irrespective of age or cultural background, plays a vital role in the overall functioning of the body. This notion challenges prevalent cultural biases that may marginalize or restrict the participation of the youth in leadership roles. The imagery calls for an inclusive approach, recognizing that each individual, regardless of their background, contributes to the richness and diversity of the community. In the context of youth leadership, this encourages a departure from prejudiced perspectives and fosters an environment where the youth are embraced as integral members of the body of Christ, contributing to the community’s spiritual growth and vitality.

Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory, proposed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s, is a psychological theory that seeks to explain intergroup behaviour and the formation of group identity (Brown, 2020). The theory posits that individuals categorize themselves and others into social groups based on shared characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, religion, or organizational affiliation (McKeown et al., 2016). This categorization leads to the development of social identity, where individuals perceive themselves as part of a particular group (in-group) and distinguish themselves from others (out-group).

A key tenet of Social Identity Theory is the idea of in-group favouritism, where individuals exhibit a preference for members of their own social group (Mangum & Block, 2018). In the context of youth leadership, cultural biases can significantly influence in-group favouritism. Young leaders may naturally gravitate towards those who share similar cultural backgrounds, fostering a sense of solidarity and mutual understanding. This favouritism may manifest in the allocation of opportunities, collaboration, and support, potentially creating challenges for leaders who do not align with the predominant cultural norms within a given community or organization.

Social Identity Theory also incorporates social comparison processes, wherein individuals may rely on stereotypes to differentiate between in-groups and out-groups (Huddy, 2010). In the realm of youth leadership, cultural biases can fuel stereotyping, leading to assumptions that leaders from specific cultural backgrounds lack the requisite experience or capability to lead effectively. Stereotyping based on cultural biases can be detrimental to the development of a diverse and inclusive leadership landscape (McKeown et al., 2016).

It oversimplifies the complexities of individual capabilities and potential contributions, perpetuating inaccurate generalizations. Addressing these issues requires a conscious effort to challenge stereotypes, promote cultural understanding, and recognize the unique strengths that leaders from diverse backgrounds bring to the table. By fostering an environment that values and celebrates diversity, youth leadership can transcend the constraints imposed by cultural biases, allowing for a more equitable and effective leadership paradigm.

Attitudes of Youth Towards Leadership Roles

The attitudes of youth toward leadership roles can be analysed through the cognitive, affective, and behavioural components of attitude.

The cognitive component of attitudes toward leadership roles in youth involves their beliefs and thoughts about what leadership entails, the qualities of effective leaders, and the impact leaders can have on a group or community (Gagauz & Chivaciuc, 2021). This component is rooted in the mental processes through which youth form perceptions and make sense of the concept of leadership. The cognitive component encompasses the youth's understanding of the responsibilities and roles that leaders undertake (Fortner et al., 2021). This involves their beliefs about the tasks and challenges that leaders face, ranging from decision-making and problem-solving to fostering collaboration and guiding a team toward common goals.

The affective component of attitudes toward leadership roles delves into the emotional responses and feelings that youth associate with the prospect of taking on leadership responsibilities (Gagauz & Chivaciuc, 2021). This component is crucial in understanding the nuanced and subjective aspects of how youth approach and engage with leadership. Youth experiencing positive affective responses are often inspired when contemplating leadership roles. The prospect of leading is seen as an opportunity to effect positive change, inspire others within the community, and contribute to meaningful transformations (Andre et al., 2015). The feeling of inspiration serves as a driving force, motivating them to actively engage in leadership roles with a sense of purpose.

The behavioural component of attitudes involves the observable actions and intentions of individuals concerning a particular object, concept, or, in this case, leadership roles (Jena, 2020). In the context of youth attitudes toward leadership roles, the behavioural component is crucial in understanding how their beliefs and emotions translate into tangible actions related to leadership. The behavioural component begins with the intentions of youth regarding leadership roles (Sokal et al., 2020). It involves their conscious thoughts about actively seeking and pursuing opportunities to take on leadership responsibilities. Observable actions aligned with this intention may include actively applying for leadership positions, expressing interest in leading projects or initiatives, or seeking mentorship to develop leadership skills.

Empirical Review

Salami and Ufoma (2016) explored the impact of culture on leadership styles. The study utilized the multi-factor leadership questionnaire. A survey comprising five distinct scales was administered to 182 workers of a tertiary institution to assess their perceptions. The data collected for this study was analyzed using regression analysis and descriptive statistics. The results indicated that transformational leaders were more likely to exhibit low uncertainty avoidance, femininity, collectivism, and low power distance. On the other hand, transactional leaders were more likely to display high uncertainty avoidance, masculinity, individualism, and high power distance. Previous research findings were supported by the observation that females exhibited a higher degree of transformative behavior compared to males.

Unal (2017) outlined the correlation between Turkish culture and the manner in which Turkish female leaders conduct leadership. The study employed a qualitative research methodology centered in the philosophy of grounded theory. A comprehensive understanding of the correlation between Turkish cultural values and the leadership styles of Turkish female leaders was obtained by conducting interviews with ten women in leadership positions who have diverse origins. The study's findings suggest that Turkish female leaders' leadership styles are influenced by the Turkish culture. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that Islamic beliefs do not have a substantial influence on the leadership behaviors of female leaders. However, cultural factors may still play a role.

(Gagauz & Chivaciuc, 2021) conducted a study on the perspective of young individuals regarding gender roles within the family unit in order to ascertain the impact of education levels, gender, and other characteristics on their preferences for traditional or egalitarian gender dynamics in relationships. The information is derived from a sociological survey done in 2019 in Chisinau, which focused on the youth population. The survey was carried out on a representative sample of 506 individuals. The study findings indicate that young people's perception of the fundamental attributes of men and women is still influenced by stereotypes and aligns with the intermediate balance model, which is typical during the shift from traditional gender roles based on labor division to more egalitarian ones.

Conceptual Model of the Study

The study is guided by the conceptual model indicated in Figure 1.

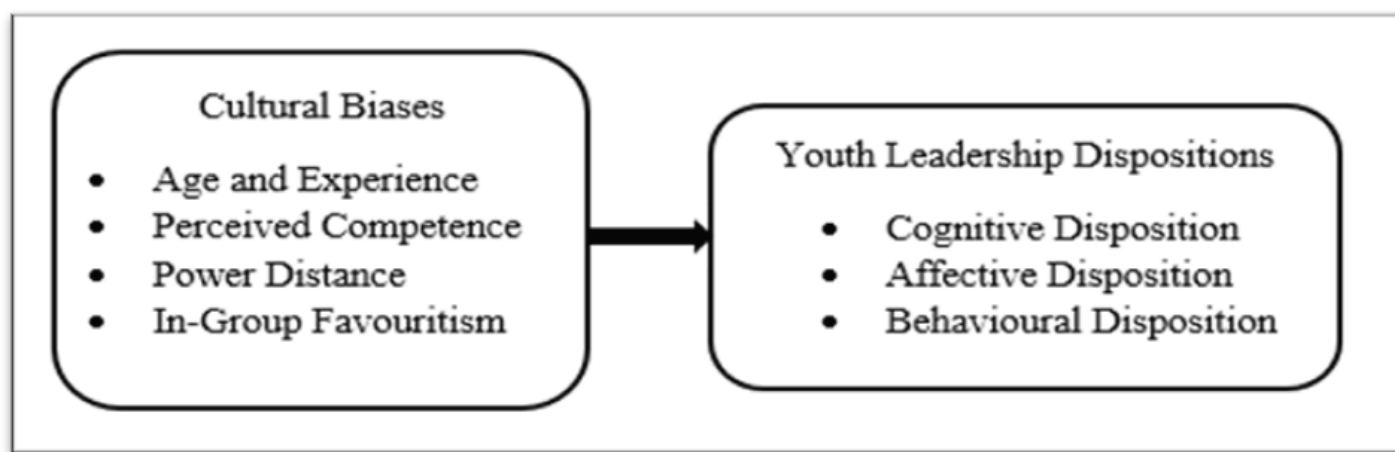


Fig. 1 Conceptual Model (Source, Author's construct, 2024)

The conceptual model for the study is designed to comprehensively investigate the dynamics surrounding cultural biases and their impact on leadership disposition among the youth of Adventist Church in the Techiman Municipality. The study's primary focus is to understand how various cultural biases, such as age and experience, perceived competence, power distance, and in-group favouritism, intersect and influence the leadership attitudes of the youth within the church community. A critical objective of the study is to assess the leadership disposition of the youth by exploring their attitudes towards assuming leadership roles. This involves an in-depth analysis of cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions of leadership disposition, recognizing that effective leadership encompasses not only skills and behaviours but also the underlying beliefs and emotions associated with leadership roles.

METHODOLOGY

The study is based on quantitative research approach. Quantitative research is a systematic empirical research method that deals mainly with the systematic collection and interpretation of numerical data (Park & Park, 2016). In this study, the primary objective is to assess and evaluate the development of Adventists youth in church leadership. By employing quantitative methods, the researcher has the capacity to assign numerical values to the various aspects being studied, thereby facilitating the systematic analysis of data.

Table I Demographic Data

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	114	28.5
	Male	286	71.5

	Total	400	100
Age	21 – 30 years	231	57.8
	31 – 40 years	96	24
	41 – 50 years	46	11.5
	51 – 60 years	21	5.3
	61 years and above	6	1.5
	Total	400	100
Education	SHS and Below	90	22.5
	Diploma/HND	40	10
	University	270	67.5
	Total	400	100
Years in Church Leadership	1 – 5 years	79	19.8
	6 – 10 years	142	35.5
	11 – 15 years	72	18
	16 – 20 years	52	13
	More than 20 years	55	13.8
	Total	400	100

The explanatory research design is adopted in this study. Explanatory research aims to clarify and provide a deeper understanding of a phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2000). In this study, the primary variables of interest are cultural biases and youth leadership of the church. Using an explanatory design allows the researcher to investigate how cultural biases might be linked to youth leadership dispositions, shedding light on the nature of this relationship. It allows the researcher to investigate the role of church towards the improvement of leadership among the youth. By using statistical techniques and collecting data over time, the study can provide evidence of causation or the absence of it, which can be crucial for decision-making within the church.

Geographically, the study is conducted among the leadership and youth of the Adventists churches within the Techiman Municipality. Specifically, the research for this dissertation confines four selected churches in the Techiman Municipality. These are Techiman Central, Amo Memorial Seventh-day Adventist Church (AMSDA), Forikrom Central, and Bamiri churches. The researcher conveniently selected 100 respondents (90 youth and 10 leaders) from each church. A total of 400 respondents were considered for the study. The study was based on the use of questionnaires. The questionnaires were basically close-ended and consisted of 5-Likert assessment scales. The scales ranged from either Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1) or Greater Extent (5) to Less Extent (1), depending on the question. Section “A” sourced data on the demographic profile of the respondents. Section “B” looked at the prevalent cultural biases that shape perceptions of leadership among the youth. This section sourced data on age and experience, perceived competence, power distance, and in-group favoritism. Section “C” contained questions that examined the leadership disposition of the youth. The data was analysed using the SPSS software version 22. The collected data was entered into the software and all assumptions check. The analysis was based on both descriptive and inferential analysis. The study will make

use of the one-sample t-test, the Pearson Correlation and the regression analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the results, out of the 400 respondents, 71.5% of them were males, as against 28.5% who are females. With age, the result reveals that the majority of the respondents (57.8%) were between 21 and 30 years old. This group is followed by those aged 31 to 40 years (24.0%), and a representation from those within 41–50 years constituting 11.5%. Other age groups were those within 51–60 years, which account for 5.3%, and those above 60 years, which account for 1.5%. The predominance of younger respondents aligns with the study's focus on youth leadership, suggesting that the perceptions identified may largely reflect the views of a younger cohort.

Regarding educational background, the data indicates a high level of educational attainment among the respondents, with 67.5% having completed university education. A smaller portion, 22.5%, have completed Senior High School (SHS) or below, and 10.0% hold a Diploma or Higher National Diploma (HND). The experience of respondents in church leadership varies, with the majority (35.5%) having 6 to 10 years of leadership experience, followed by 19.8% with 1 to 5 years, 18.0% with 11 to 15 years, 13.8% with 20 years, and 13.0% with 16 to 20 years of experience. This spread indicates that many respondents have substantial leadership experience, which could provide insights into the leadership development within the church.

Preliminary Analysis

Before the analysis was undertaken various test were carried out to ensure that the data was fit for the analysis. Among the checks carried out include checking for missing data, identifying and treating outliers, normality test (for the dependent variable), linearity test, multicollinearity, homoscedasticity and autocorrelation (independence of errors).

The study used the frequency function in SPSS to determine the existence of missing data in the dataset. From the results, all the responses except that for “EEY2” registered no missing data. The response for “EEY2” had only one missing data representing 0.2%. Given that this percentage was low (0.2%), the study chose to ignore the missing value as it would not significantly impact on the overall analysis. This is in agreement with Kline (2015) who suggests that for small amounts of missing data (less than 5% missing data), then ignoring the missing values is often more appropriate.

Outliers can have significant effects on statistical analysis, particularly in regression modeling and hypothesis testing. Their presence can distort results, affect assumptions, and lead to misleading conclusions. To check for outliers, the study made use of the standardized residuals. A standardized residual greater than ± 3 suggests that a data point is an outlier. The predicted values represent the estimated scores of the dependent variable (Leadership Disposition). The standardized residuals, which help detect potential outliers, range from -2.646 to 2.909. Since values exceeding ± 3 are often considered problematic outliers, the absence of such extreme values indicates that the model does not suffer from significant outlier influence. The mean of standardized residuals is 0.000, and their standard deviation is 0.999, confirming that the residuals are properly standardized and likely follow a normal distribution.

Normality of the Data

The normality of the data was determined using the histogram curve. The goal is to visually determine whether the distribution of residuals approximates a normal distribution, which is crucial for regression analysis. The diagram is indicated in Figure 2. A normal distribution is characterized by a bell-shaped, symmetric curve centered around the mean. The frequency of data points should decrease symmetrically as you move away from the center towards the tails. A normal histogram will have a single central peak (unimodal). If the histogram displays a bell-shaped, symmetric curve, it indicates that the residuals are normally distributed, fulfilling one of the key assumptions for regression analysis.

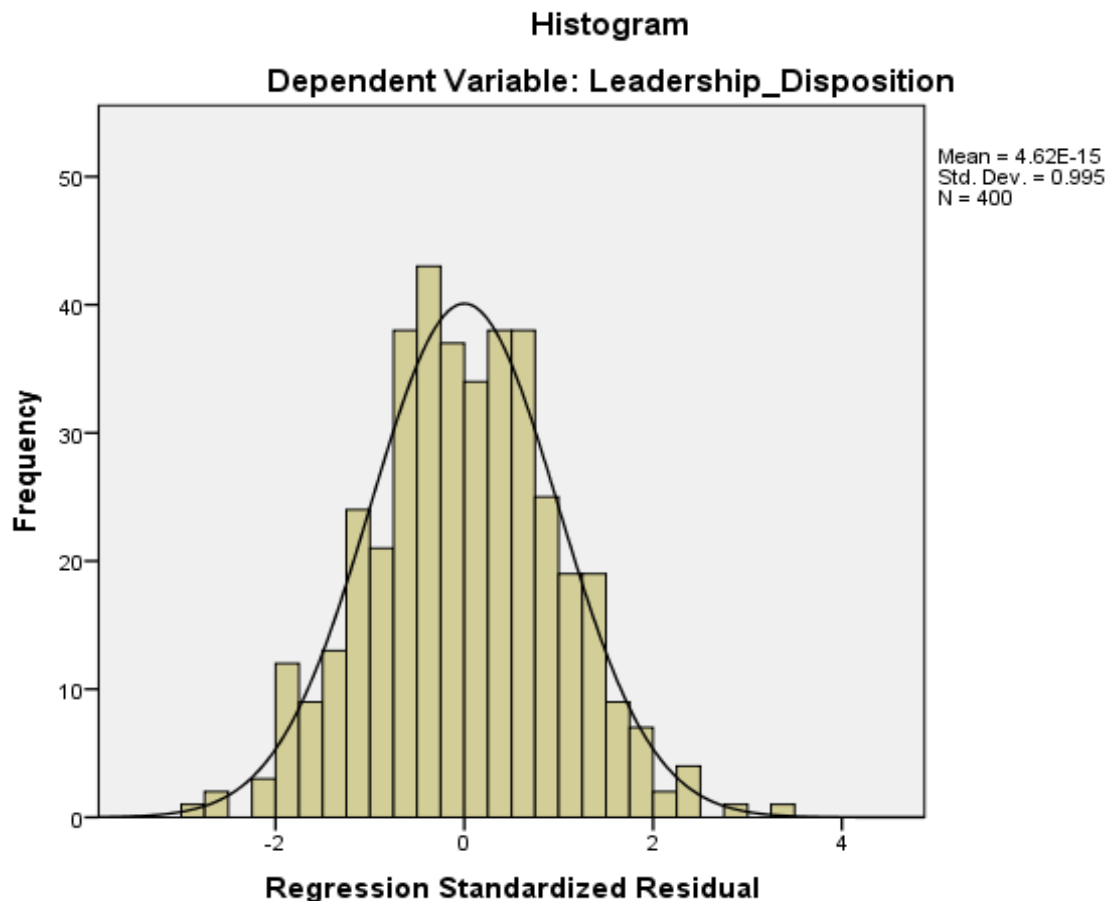


Fig. 2 Normality of Data

An observation of Figure 2 indicates that the data are normally distributed around the mean.

Multicollinearity and Autocorrelation

Multicollinearity was determined using the Variance Inflation Factor. The interpretation of VIF values follows a generally accepted range: a VIF of 1 indicates no multicollinearity, values between 1 and 5 suggest moderate multicollinearity, and values above 5 indicate high multicollinearity, which is usually a warning sign that could affect the reliability of the regression model. In particular, VIF values above 10 are considered indicative of severe multicollinearity. The VIF values are 1.233, 1.453, 1.419, and 1.257.

From the results, VIF values for all the independent variables are well below the threshold of 5, with none exceeding 1.453. This indicates that there is no significant multicollinearity among the independent variables included in the regression model. The tolerance values, all close to 1, further affirm that each variable independently contributes to explaining the dependent variable without causing distortion due to overlap with other predictors. The study determined autocorrelation of the variables using the Durbin-Watson (DW) statistic. If the DW statistic is close to 2, it indicates that there is no autocorrelation in the residuals. This suggests that the error terms are independent of each other, and the model's assumptions are not violated. The Durbin-Watson (DW) statistic of 2.014 indicates that there is no significant autocorrelation in the residuals of the regression model.

Prevalent Cultural Biases that shape Perceptions of Leadership among the Youth of Adventist Church

The age factor was found to highly influence leadership perceptions among the youth (Overall mean = 4.03, SD = 0.904). Notably, there is a strong belief that younger leaders tend to become more innovative as they mature (mean = 4.13, SD = 0.849) with older leaders being perceived as bringing valuable experience and wisdom to decision-making processes (mean = 4.11, SD = 0.871). However, youth leaders often face skepticism due to

their perceived lack of experience, (mean = 3.84, SD = 0.889), with seasoned leaders encountering challenges in connecting with younger generations (Mean = 4.06, SD = 0.881). The belief that leadership effectiveness is inherently linked to age is prevalent (mean = 4.01, SD = 1.031).

The perceived competence of youth leaders is another major factor shaping leadership perceptions (Overall Mean = 4.17, SD = 0.83). Specifically, there was a high assurance in the competence of youth leaders to represent their communities (Mean = 4.34, SD = 0.718), high perception on youth leaders as competent in navigating challenges and making effective decisions (Mean = 4.20, SD = 0.809), with youth leaders possess the necessary skills and abilities to lead effectively (Mean = 4.30, SD = 0.778) and inspiring others (mean = 4.04, SD = 0.940). While slightly lower, confidence in handling complex issues (mean = 3.99, SD = 0.905) still indicates almost strong belief in their competence.

Power Distance significantly shapes perceptions of leadership among youth in the Adventist Church (Overall Mean = 4.21, SD = 0.700). Specifically, there is an indication that the perceived gap between youth leaders and senior clergy members leads to feelings of inferiority (Mean = 4.19, SD = 0.700), with hierarchical structure affecting the authority of youth leaders in decision-making processes (Mean = 4.07, SD = 0.736), and youth leaders face resistance from older members of the congregation (Mean = 4.21, SD = 0.708). Youth leaders were also found to be often intimidated on communicating openly with senior clergy (Mean = 4.21, SD = 0.726) and struggling to gain recognition and respect from older members (Mean = 4.37, SD = 0.631).

In the context of In-Group Favouritism, there was a moderate level of perception of leadership among the youth (overall mean = 3.86, SD = 0.980). Specifically, the perception that leaders show favouritism towards their own social groups (Mean = 3.85, SD = 0.960), prioritizing individuals within their social circles (Mean = 3.94, SD = 0.870), with the belief that leaders trust and support those in their inner circle (Mean = 3.88, SD = 1.030). The perception of a lack of fairness and equality in the leadership of youth (Mean = 3.78, SD = 1.070) suggests some concerns about fairness, but these concerns are less pronounced.

Investigate the impact of Cultural Biases on Leadership Dispositions among the Youth

This analysis made use of Pearson Correlation and Regression Analysis. Leadership dispositions of the youth are aggregated to constitute the dependent variable for the study. The independent variables are the various dimensions of cultural biases (Age, Perceived Competence, Power Distance, and In-Group Favouritism).

The Pearson correlation analysis shows that Power Distance has the strongest relationship with leadership disposition ($r = 0.663$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that the hierarchical structure within the church, where senior members often hold more decision-making power, significantly affects youth leadership disposition. The high correlation suggests that perceived power imbalances create barriers for youth, influencing their confidence, willingness to communicate openly, and overall engagement in leadership roles. Such dynamics can discourage active participation and hinder the youth's development of leadership skills, reflecting how deeply ingrained power hierarchies can impact young leaders' behavioural and cognitive dispositions.

Perceived Competence also significantly correlates with leadership disposition ($r = 0.480$, $p < 0.01$). This relationship implies that when the youth feel their competence is doubted, it adversely affects their leadership confidence and disposition. The perceived lack of recognition from older congregants or peers can lead to self-doubt, impacting their cognitive and affective disposition towards leadership. The youth's ability to think critically, solve problems, and engage proactively in leadership roles is thus diminished when they sense that their capabilities are undervalued due to age or experience biases.

In-Group Favouritism shows a moderate yet significant correlation with leadership disposition ($r = 0.415$, $p < 0.01$). This bias highlights how favouritism towards specific social groups can influence youth leadership experiences, creating perceptions of exclusivity and unequal opportunities. Such favouritism can erode trust, diminish the sense of fairness, and affect youth leaders' morale and motivation. The moderate correlation suggests that while favouritism is not the most dominant cultural bias, it still significantly impacts how youth perceive leadership roles, potentially leading to disengagement and a lack of inclusivity in leadership dynamics.

Lastly, age has a weaker but significant correlation with leadership disposition ($r = 0.378$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that age-related biases, though not as impactful as other biases, still play a role in shaping the leadership experiences of youth. Younger leaders often face challenges in being perceived as credible or experienced, which can affect their ability to lead effectively. This correlation underscores the need for a more inclusive approach that values the potential and contributions of youth regardless of age, promoting a more diverse leadership environment where youth feel empowered to contribute.

The study then determined the impact of the leadership dispositions of the youth on the various dimensions of cultural biases (Age, Perceived Competence, Power Distance, and In-Group Favouritism). The analysis however determined the assumption of Normality, Multicollinearity and Autocorrelation.

Regression Coefficients of Cultural Biases and Leadership Dispositions

The model indicates an R-value of 0.723, indicating a strong positive correlation between cultural biases and leadership dispositions. The R-Square value of 0.522 suggests that approximately 52.2% of the variance in leadership disposition among the youth can be explained by the combined influence of the four cultural biases: Age, Perceived Competence, Power Distance, and In-Group Favouritism. The Adjusted R-Square of 0.517 confirms the robustness of the model by adjusting for the number of predictors, showing that these biases significantly shape youth leadership perceptions. The overall model is statistically significant, as indicated by an F-value of 107.958 ($p < 0.001$), confirming that cultural biases collectively have a substantial impact on leadership dispositions among the youth.

The most influential bias is Power Distance (Beta = 0.496 $p < 0.001$). This result highlights that hierarchical structures and perceived power imbalances within the church setting strongly predict leadership dispositions among the youth. Perceived Competence also shows a significant positive effect on leadership disposition (Beta = 0.142, $p = 0.001$). This indicates that when youth feel their abilities are acknowledged, it positively influences their engagement and disposition towards leadership roles. In-Group Favouritism has a standardized coefficient of 0.197, with a significant t-value of 5.063 ($p < 0.001$), showing a moderate impact on leadership disposition. This suggests that favouritism towards certain social groups within the church influences how youth perceive fairness and inclusivity in leadership roles. Age also contributes significantly to leadership disposition (Beta = 0.115, $p = 0.003$). Although its impact is relatively smaller compared to other biases, it still indicates that age-related factors, such as being seen as too young or inexperienced, play a role in shaping leadership attitudes.

DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

Age-related biases in leadership perceptions are well-documented. Smith explore how generational differences impact leadership perceptions, noting that younger leaders are often seen as innovative, while older leaders are valued for their experience (Smith, 2003). This aligns with the finding that youth leaders are seen as increasingly innovative over time, whereas older leaders are respected for their wisdom. However, Aziz (2020) highlighted that younger leaders frequently face scepticism due to perceived inexperience. Similarly, Jogulu (2010) discussed the generational divide in leadership, where younger leaders struggle to gain respect from older generations, which resonates with the observation of the challenges faced by the youth.

Perceived competence is a crucial factor in leadership effectiveness. Wilson et al. (2020), argued that confidence in leadership skills, including advocacy and decision-making, is essential for effective leadership. The analysis reflects strong confidence in these areas for youth leaders, yet moderate concerns about handling complex issues. Unal (2017) emphasized that while youth leaders may be competent in advocacy and decision-making, they often need additional support to handle more intricate challenges and inspire others effectively. Power distance, or the perceived gap between different levels in a hierarchical structure, significantly impacts leadership dynamics. The findings that youth leaders face challenges due to hierarchical structures align with the study of Salami and Ufoma (2016). Fortner et al. (2021) also discussed how high-power distance can create barriers for younger leaders, including feelings of inferiority and resistance from older members. In-group favouritism, where leaders are perceived to prioritize their social circles, affects leadership perceptions. Hook et al. (2016) discussed how in-group favouritism can influence perceptions of fairness and inclusivity in

leadership. The analysis indicates moderate concerns about fairness, reflecting that leaders might be seen as prioritizing their own circles.

The study finds that cultural biases, including Power Distance, Perceived Competence, In-Group Favouritism, and age-related biases, significantly shape leadership dispositions, explaining 52.2% of the variance. These results are consistent with the work of Chichir et al. (2016), who explored the influence of religious and cultural contexts on leadership roles, revealing how perceived power imbalances and hierarchical structures impact leadership effectiveness. Similarly, Sanduleac and Capatina (2016) emphasized the importance of recognition and feedback in developing leadership identity, supporting the study's finding that Perceived Competence positively affects youth engagement in leadership roles.

Moreover, the emphasis on Power Distance as the most influential bias reflects Sokal et al. findings on the fragmented discourse of leadership shaped by hierarchical structures (Sokal et al., 2020). Their research illustrates how power dynamics and perceived imbalances affect leadership perceptions and opportunities. Furthermore, the identification of Power Distance as the most influential bias resonates with the study of Alomair (2016) review of peace leadership and the impact of hierarchical structures on leadership roles. Alomair found that hierarchical and power-related factors significantly shape leadership perceptions and opportunities, supporting the study's finding that Power Distance is a critical factor in shaping leadership dispositions among the youth. This connection highlights the persistent relevance of hierarchical dynamics in leadership contexts.

CONCLUSION

The analysis reveals that age-related biases, perceived competence, and power dynamics significantly shape leadership perceptions among the youth in the Adventist Church. Age influences perceptions with younger leaders viewed as innovative but inexperienced, while older leaders are valued for their wisdom. Perceived competence strongly affects youth leadership credibility, with high confidence in their decision-making and advocacy skills, though some concerns about their handling of complex issues persist. Power Distance and in-group favouritism also play crucial roles, with hierarchical barriers and favouritism within social circles affecting the inclusivity, fairness, and authority of youth leaders.

The study also demonstrated that cultural biases significantly influence youth leadership dispositions, with hierarchical power distance being the most impactful factor, followed by perceived competence. The model, explaining 52.2% of the variance, highlighted that while power distance strongly affects perceptions of leadership, recognition of youth abilities and in-group favouritism also play substantial roles, with age-related biases contributing to a lesser extent.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher recommends the following.

- Addressing the cultural biases that shape perceptions of leadership, such as age-related biases and power dynamics, requires targeted interventions. The church should implement training and awareness programs to challenge and change entrenched biases about age and competence. Facilitating open dialogues and workshops on inclusivity and fairness can help mitigate the effects of power distance and in-group favouritism. Promoting intergenerational collaboration and creating platforms where youth can demonstrate their leadership capabilities can also help in reshaping perceptions and fostering a more equitable environment.
- To mitigate the impact of cultural biases on leadership dispositions, it is recommended that the church adopt strategies to address power distance, perceived competence, and in-group favouritism. This could involve revising church structures and processes to promote greater equality and inclusivity. Implementing mentorship programs that focus on recognizing and developing the competencies of youth leaders can help balance perceptions of competence. Additionally, creating policies to reduce favouritism and ensure fairness in leadership opportunities will help in fostering a more supportive and unbiased

environment for youth leaders.

Suggestion for Further Studies

Further research could evaluate the effectiveness of mentorship programs in enhancing youth leadership skills and mitigating cultural biases. Combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews could provide a deeper understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of current mentorship initiatives. This approach could help refine mentorship practices and ensure they are more aligned with the needs of youth leaders. Also, more in-depth studies could explore the cognitive and affective dimensions of leadership disposition in greater detail.

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