Perceived Spiritual Leadership Behavior, Leadership Skills, and Spiritual Well-being in Seventh-day Adventist Congregational Settings in Rwanda: A Quantitative Study

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Abstract

This quantitative study investigated the relationship between perceived spiritual leadership behavior, leadership skills, and spiritual well-being in Seventh-day Adventist congregational settings in Rwanda. A cross-sectional survey was conducted using a self-administered questionnaire among 312 Seventh-day Adventist congregants. The results showed that spiritual leadership (r = .69; $p<.01$), leadership skills (r =. 31; $p< .0l$), and age (r =. 13; $p< .05$) are significant correlates of spiritual well-being. The study also revealed that spiritual leadership behaviors, such as leading by example (β = .14, p < .01) and integrity (β = .13, p < .01), significantly influence congregational spiritual well-being. Additionally, spiritual caregiving (β = .21, p < 0.05) and counseling (β = .16, p < 0.05) were identified as significant and positive contributors to spiritual well-being. On the other hand, factors such as age, educational level, and gender did not significantly impact congregational spiritual well-being. The overall results indicate that spiritual leadership significantly predicts congregational spiritual well-being (adj. r^2= 0.47; β = 0.69, p < 0.001) when all variables were considered. These results underscore the importance of spiritual leadership behaviors in enhancing congregational spiritual well-being within the Seventh-day Adventist congregations in Rwanda. They emphasize the necessity for spiritual leaders to demonstrate authentic spiritual leadership qualities to positively influence their congregations. The study provides valuable insights that can assist leaders in purposefully nurturing the spiritual well-being of their members.

Keywords: Spiritual leadership, leadership skills, spiritual well-being, Seventh-day Adventist, Rwanda

Introduction

Well-being is a broad concept encompassing a person's life, including spiritual, physical, social, and mental aspects. Spiritual well-being refers to the extent to which a person feels a sense of satisfaction and perceives their connection with God or a higher power (Alorani & Alradaydeh, 2017; Ghaderi et al., 2018; Ziapour et al., 2017). Leung and Pong (2021) describe spiritual well-being as the lived experience of spirituality.

Spiritual well-being is also an indicator of meaningful relationships with God, oneself, and others (Juškauskienė et al., 2023). It is characterized by strong faith, hope, and commitment, guided by a worldview or belief system that provides meaning and self-fulfillment (Hawk, 1994). A sense of meaning and significance is a crucial dimension of spiritual well-being. From a Christian perspective, a spiritual person is controlled by the Spirit of God (de Freitas et al., 2022). Hatala and Roger (2022) say that religion, closely linked with spirituality, is a uniquely human phenomenon and a source of individual and community growth and strength. They define spiritual well-being as an institutionalized or personal system of beliefs and practices (e.g., regular prayers and worship) that is related to the divine.

Postmodernism has influenced various aspects of modern life, including the church (Bruinsma, 2021). Despite this, there is a growing interest in spirituality (Sheldrake, 2013). However, only a few religious denominations have prioritized the spiritual well-being of their members (Ellsworth & Ellsworth, 2010). This has led some Christians to seek meaning and purpose outside their church, resulting in

declining church membership and attendance (Bruinsma, 2021; Vermeer & Scheepers, 2021; Sikkink & Emerson, 2020).

The postmodern challenges facing Christians call for effective spiritual leadership to nurture the spiritual well-being of congregations. In its broadest sense, leadership is a timeless concept that encompasses an influence relationship and involves a person's ability to influence others to achieve a common purpose (Daft, 2023; Northouse, 2022).

Spiritual leadership is important in corporate organizations and congregational settings. Within a congregational context, spiritual leadership refers to the role of pastors as the primary spiritual leaders responsible for guiding, shepherding, and nurturing their congregations' spiritual well-being (Hove, 2023; Huapaya, 2020; Manala, 2010). Thus, pastors' spiritual ability and influence lead church members to deeply connect with God, guiding them to mature in their faith and understand God's purpose (Kim & Villance, 2019). Ilarious (2020) argues that spiritual leadership in the church context plays an important role in fostering commitment, shared aims, accountability, and spiritual well-being. Blackaby and Blackaby (2011) clarify the distinction between spiritual and secular leadership. Spiritual leaders work towards fulfilling God's agenda instead of their own, guiding people away from their selfish and sinful desires and towards a relationship with God.

Most research on spiritual well-being has focused on patients, students, nurses, and non-congregational contexts (Azarsa et al., 2015; Leung & Pong, 2021; Whitford & Olver, 2012). Spiritual well-being in congregational settings is often assumed and taken for granted. Few studies have examined spiritual leadership in religious contexts or congregational spirituality (Kim & Villance, 2019; Wollschleger, 2018; Obi et al., 2021; Stewart et al., 2019). To the best of our knowledge, no prior quantitative study has been conducted in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Africa, specifically in Rwanda, to investigate the relationships between spiritual leadership, leadership skills, and spiritual well-being. Against this background, this study investigated the interplay between spiritual leadership, leadership skills, and spiritual well-being in congregational settings, as outlined in the following research questions and the conceptual framework in Figure 1:

1. Are there any significant correlations between spiritual leadership behaviors, leadership skills, age, educational level, baptism age, and spiritual well-being in Seventh-day Adventist congregations in Rwanda?

2. Which dimensions of spiritual leadership behaviors significantly predict spiritual well-being in Seventh-day Adventist congregations in Rwanda?

3. Which leadership skills significantly predict spiritual well-being in Seventh-day Adventist congregations in Rwanda?

4. Which of the variables singly or in combination affects spiritual well-being in Seventh-day Adventist congregations in Rwanda?

Literature Review

This study is anchored on James W. Fowler's faith development theory (1981) asserts that individuals advance through various stages of spiritual maturity as they navigate their beliefs and experiences. Fowler delineated seven stages of faith development, including childlike acceptance of religious doctrines, critical evaluation of one's faith, and cultivation of a profoundly personal and mature connection with the divine. We utilize this theory to elucidate how individuals evolve their spirituality and well-being throughout their lives. Fowler's theory is particularly applicable in congregational settings, where a spiritual leader's role involves consistently encouraging spiritual growth and well-being among congregants by providing guidance and direction through personal mentoring and nurturing members to foster spiritual well-being.

The Concept of Spirituality

Spirituality is an abstract concept with multiple meanings (Rathee et al., 2020; Reinert & Koenig, 2013). It is not physical or always easy to measure. Tarumi et al. (2016) describe spirituality as an inner system that involves the total human being and a divine being. According to Garcia-Zamor and Haensel (2018), spirituality is an internal quality that transcends the basic instincts of the mind and engages with the world based on the foundation of meaning and values. Tang (n.d) describes spirituality as those attitudes, beliefs, and practices that animate people's lives and help them reach out towards the supra-natural realities. Akinlolu (2013) argued that spirituality encompasses more than just an individual's belief systems or devout practices, piety, and religiosity. To this end, Wintz and Cooper (2009) contended that spirituality is an inherent quality present in every individual, irrespective of their religious beliefs or affiliations. Thus, in a secular sense, spirituality refers to an individual's quest for purpose and meaning in life, which may or may not be connected to religion (Westera, 2016; Tarumi et al., 2016). In this sense, spirituality is a private activity that does not require membership in a group or a specific place of worship (Garcia-Zamor & Haensel, 2018).

However, this paper is rooted in Christian spirituality, the fundamental experience of Christian beliefs and practices shared with others who are members of an organized denomination or Christian religion (Benefiel, Fry, & Geigle, 2014; Pandey, 2017). Christian spirituality revolves around Christ's principles and relies on a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and the Bible to guide the spiritual path. "True spirituality is not the fruit of human effort or the works of our willpower, but the accomplishment of the Holy Spirit" (Regalado, 2007, p. 25). This helps a person find self-fulfillment and a Christian perspective, instilling hope.

A classic definition of Christian spirituality is offered by Michael Downey: "The Spirit at work in persons (1) within a culture, (2) in relation to a tradition, (3) in memory of Jesus Christ, (4) in the light of contemporary events, hopes, sufferings and promises, (5) in efforts to combine elements of action and contemplation, (6) with respect to charism and community, (7) as expressed and authenticated in praxis" (cited in Bowe, 2003, p. 12). Downey's words highlight the multidimensional construct of spirituality in general and Christian spirituality in particular. In essence, Christian spirituality is the manifestation of a vibrant Christian life and experience demonstrated in meaningful action. Tang (n.d.) adds that spirituality in the Christian sense is Trinitarian, incarnational, grace-filled living, and theology in action. The spiritual leader of the local Seventh-day Adventist congregation is also referred to as the pastor.

Spiritual Well-being

Spiritual well-being is important for a person's total wellness (Rudolph, 2023; Wong, 2023). If fulfilled, it is a basic human necessity that leaves an individual with a sense of purpose, meaning, and belonging (Egel & Fry, 2016; Tavares et al., 2022). Bose (2023) contends that spiritual well-being is not only a concern for religious people. It is intrinsic to all people and is an important component of mental health (Plante & Thoresen, 2007; Tavares, 2022; Worthington, 1989).

A classic definition of spiritual well-being was initially introduced by the National Interfaith Coalition on Aging (NICA) in 1975 as "the affirmation of life in a relationship with God, self, community and environment that nurtures and celebrates wholeness" (cited in Oglesby et al., 2021, p. 518; & Obi et al., 2021, p. 2). Oglesby et al. (2021) categorized spiritual well-being into vertical and horizontal dimensions. The horizontal dimension, also known as existential well-being, relates to one's sense of purpose and life satisfaction. On the other hand, the vertical dimension refers to religious well-being and an individual's relationship with a higher power. Therefore, spiritual well-being is assessed based on the quality of the relationship between a person, and a higher being, and others. Fisher (2016) further described spiritual well-being as

a dynamic state of being characterized by how well individuals live in harmony across four domains: personal (finding meaning, purpose, and life values), communal (encompassing interpersonal relationships, morality, culture, and religion), environmental (having a sense of awe and wonder in nature), and transcendental (having a connection with a supernatural being).

Langdon and Hinton (2020) described spiritual well-being in a congregation setting as the holistic integration of physical, mental, and spiritual health within a faith community and emphasized the importance of spiritual care as a component of overall wellness. This concept is grounded in the understanding that faith communities are not only centers for spiritual and moral development but also play a crucial role in promoting physical and emotional health. Spiritual leadership and active engagement in spiritual practices play vital roles in nurturing congregants' spiritual well-being. According to VanderWeele et al. (2021), Christian spiritual well-being can be conceived as a state wherein a person's life is geared towards eternal flourishing or as a state wherein all aspects of a person's life are considered good in relation to their ultimate end in God.

Furthermore, the literature on spiritual well-being regarding church members often emphasizes the role of pastoral care and leadership in nurturing and fostering the spiritual growth of congregants (Kropf, n.d.). VanderWeele et al. (2021) delineated spiritual well-being into six domains: (i) beliefs that align with Christian doctrines and are supported by scriptures; (ii) practices that sustain Christian faith and commitment, such as prayer and church attendance; (iii) service, including helping those in need, supporting the Christian community, and sharing one's faith; (iv) communion with God, comprising various relational, experiential, and cognitive aspects; (v) character, comprising the virtues of faith, hope, and love as well as a sense of calling and growth in holiness; and (vi) relationships, which involve love for others, forgiveness, and spiritual social support. Each of these domains contributes to a person's progress towards their ultimate end in God. In this paper, spiritual well-being essentially refers to a personal relationship and connection with God, including practices that build Christian faith and spiritual experiences.

Spiritual Leadership in Congregational Setting

Leadership behavior embodies the actions that leaders exhibit in their interactions with others and in pursuit of organizational goals. By extension, spiritual leadership behaviors involve the values and actions that leaders exhibit to influence others positively. Spiritual leadership is largely attributed to Fry (2003), who defined spiritual leadership as "comprising the values, attitudes, and behaviors that are necessary to intrinsically motivate one's self and others so that they have a sense of spiritual survival through calling and membership" (p. 694). Doohan (2007) explains spiritual leadership as a model that unites actions with principles. It emphasizes self-transcendence and incorporates personal values, community-building skills, managerial competence, and organizational renewal in response to spiritual challenges. Spiritual leaders are guided by values such as integrity, shared vision, service, purpose, humility, courage, and the proactive encouragement of others to be their best (Frisdiantara & Sahertian, 2012; Hage & Posner, 2015).

In a congregational setting, spiritual leadership is " moving people on to God's Agenda" (Blackaby and Blackaby (2011, p.36). Pastors function as spiritual leaders in congregations, explicitly serving as spiritual guides and nurturing the community of faith (Adams et al., 2017; Rogers, 2023). The pastor's pivotal role significantly impacts the congregation's spiritual life. Ilarious (2020) cautions that not all leaders in religious organizations are spiritual leaders. An authentic spiritual leader nurtures and influences others to discover their full potential and true selves.
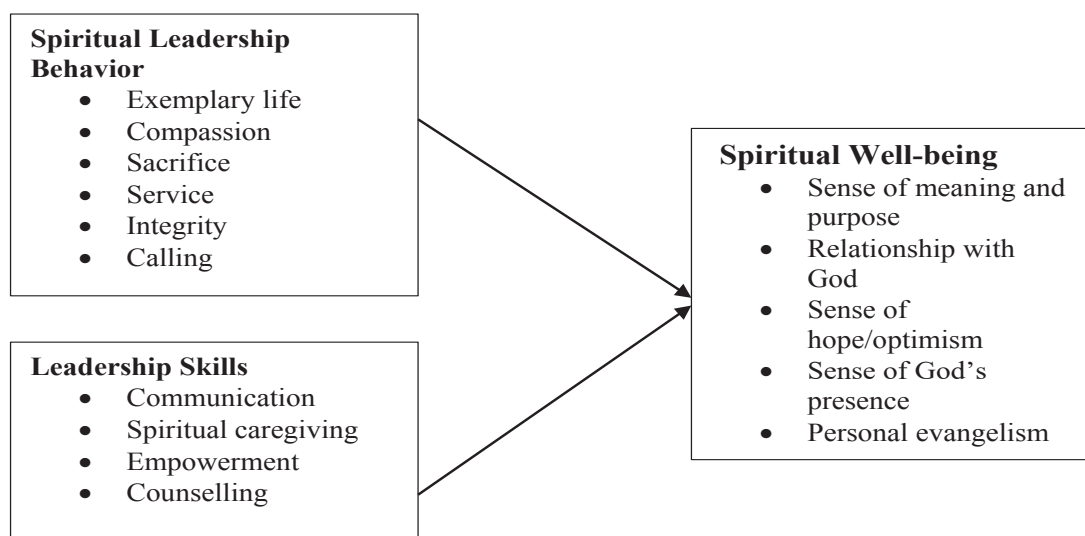
Leadership skills

Leadership skills involve using knowledge and competencies to achieve a purpose (Northouse, 2022). Three distinct skill sets are important to every leader: conceptual, human, and technical (Schedlitzki & Edwards, 2014; Northouse, 2022). Even though all three skill sets are important, human or interpersonal skills allow a leader to work effectively with others. Leaders with strong human skills can get along with others and create an atmosphere of trust that empowers others to collaborate and work together to achieve organizational goals (Gallardo, 2020; Northouse, 2022).

In Spiritual leadership, effectiveness hinges on the integration of competent skills and spirituality (Mannoia & Walkemeyer, 2007). By implication, spiritual leaders must be skilled in communication and spiritual caregiving, among other things. Spirituality is a major attribute in the effectiveness of pastoral practices. Davies (2015) emphasized that a church pastor is like a shepherd, a spiritual leader of God's people who accompanies, feeds, tends, protects, and leads the flock rightly. The aforementioned literature and research questions are conceptualized in Figure 1.

Methodology

Research Setting

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a relatively large global Christian denomination with over 22 million members worldwide (McBride et al., 2021; McChesney, 2015; Wogu, 2019; Archives, Statistics, and Research of Seventh-day Adventists [ASTR], 2022a). Given our research scope, we focused on the East Central Rwanda Conference, a part of the Rwanda Union Mission in the East-Central Africa Division of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist church (Niyonagize, 2021).

As of 2022, the church membership in Rwanda was 1,050,768 (ASTR, 2022b). We chose to study the Seventh-day Adventist Church for two primary reasons. First, it is a worldwide Christian denomination with a unique mission, distinctive lifestyle, and religious practices (Činčala et al., 2021). Second, the Rwanda Union Mission of the SDA is the largest in the territory of the East-Central Africa Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (ASTR, 2022b).

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework of the Study

Spiritual Leadership Behavior
- Exemplary life
- Compassion
- Sacrifice
- Service
- Integrity
- Calling

Leadership Skills
- Communication
- Spiritual caregiving
- Empowerment
- Counselling

Spiritual Well-being
- Sense of meaning and purpose
- Relationship with God
- Sense of hope/optimism
- Sense of God's presence
- Personal evangelism

Research Design

This study utilized a cross-sectional survey research design to examine church members' perceptions of their local church pastors' spiritual leadership, leadership skills, and members' spiritual well-being in Seventh-day Adventist congregational settings in Rwanda.

Population and Sampling

The target population for this research consists of Seventh-day Adventist church members in the east-central region of Rwanda. In this context, there are 20,908 church members from seven church districts in the East Central Rwanda Conference (Niyonagize, 2021). A sample size of 377 was determined (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970) using a proportional stratified random sampling design, with a response rate of 83% (312 questionnaires returned).

Research Instrument

Based on our conceptual model (Figure 1), we used a questionnaire to measure spiritual leadership behavior, leadership skills, and spiritual well-being. The questionnaire included a 4-point Likert scale for spiritual leadership behavior and spiritual well-being and a 5-point Likert-type scale for leadership skills. We assessed the spiritual leadership of church pastors using a 10-item scale (Cronbach's α = .88) and measured the spiritual well-being of participants using a 13-item scale (Cronbach's α = .88). Additionally, we gauged leadership skills using a 16-item scale (Cronbach's α = .94). We collected demographic information, and partic-ipation was entirely voluntary. The data were analyzed in aggregates to protect anonymity.

Data Analysis

The study analyzed collected data using descriptive and inferential statistics. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS ®) software was used. Descriptive analyses included calculating means and standard deviations to summarize the focal variables. Reliability analysis was used to calculate the internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) of the measures. Correlational analyses were used to determine the significance of the associations between variables. Multiple regression analysis was used to model the effects of spiritual leadership and leadership skills on congregational spiritual well-being.

Results

Demographic Data

As shown in Table 1, the sample comprised 183 males (59%) and 127 females (41%). Additionally, of the entire sample, 163 (52.0%) had completed high school, 115 (37%) held a bachelor's degree, 28 (9%) had a master's degree, and 4 (1%) held a doctorate degree. The average age of the respondents was 30 years (M=29.66; SD=10.79), and their mean age at baptism was approximately 17 years (M=16.85, SD= 5.17).

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Variables	N (%)	M (SD)
Gender		
Male	183 (58.7%)	
Female	127 (40.7 %)	
Educational Level		
High School	163 (52.2%)	
Bachelors	115 (36.9%)	
Masters	28 (9.0%)	
Doctorate	4 (1.3%)	
Age		29.66 (10.79)
Baptismal Age		16.85(5.17)

Note. N = 310; Missing system = 2

Perceptions of Spiritual Leadership, Leadership Skills, and Spiritual Well-being

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of spiritual leadership, leadership skills, and spiritual well-being. The mean scores for spiritual leadership and spiritual well-being on a 4-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 4 = Strongly Agree) were 3.03 (SD = .87) and 3.36 (SD = .94), respectively. A score of 3 is closer to "Agree," indicating a generally positive perception among the respondents. This suggests that Seventh-day Adventist church pastors in Rwanda are generally perceived as spiritual leaders who exemplify values such as service and sacrifice. Moreover, respondents perceived their personal level of spiritual well-being to be relatively high. The average score for leadership skills, measured on a 5-point Likert scale, was 4.07 (SD = .94), indicating that participants perceived their spiritual leaders, such as pastors, as having essential competencies in communication, caregiving, empowerment, and counseling.

Table 2

Respondents' Perceptions of spiritual leadership, leadership skills and spiritual well-being

Correlations of Spiritual Leadership Behavior, Leadership Skills, Demographics, and Spiritual Well-being

One of the goals of this research was to examine the relationships between spiritual leadership, leadership skills, respondents' demographics, and spiritual well-being among Seventh-day Adventist congregations in Rwanda. The Pearson Correlation matrix in Table 3 shows that the relationship between spiritual leadership behavior and spiritual well-being (r = .69; $p<.01$) is the strongest, suggesting that higher levels of perceived spiritual leadership behavior are associated with higher spiritual well-being among congregants. Spiritual leaders of congregations play a vital role as spiritual role models for congregants (Washington, 2016). Their behavior and actions can influence how others perceive and engage in their personal spiritual well-being and growth. By appealing to their sense of purpose and worth, pastors can do a lot to enhance the spiritual health of their followers and congregations (Mingari, 2023).

Leadership skills positively correlated with spiritual well-being (r =. 31; $p< .01$), indicating that effective leadership was related to higher levels of spiritual well-being. Although there was a positive correlation between spiritual well-being and congregants' age (r=.13; $p<$

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
Spiritual Leadership Behavior		
Exemplary life	3.15	1.21
Compassion	2.73	1.45
Sacrifice	3.16	1.20
Service	3.22	.90
Integrity	2.98	1.10
Calling	2.91	1.14
Overall Mean Score	3.03	.87
Spiritual Well-being		
Sense of meaning and purpose in life	3.38	1.07
Personal relationship with God	3.23	.74
Sense of hope/optimism	3.32	.90
Sense of God's presence	3.52	.97
Personal evangelism	3.32	1.03
Overall Mean Score	3.36	.94
Leadership Skills		
Communication	4.18	.92
Spiritual caregiving	4.07	.82
Empowerment	4.11	.84
Counselling	3.91	1.18
Overall Mean Score	4.07	.94

.05), the coefficients were quite weak (Hair et al., 2023). Gender ($r = -.06$, $p > .05$), educational level ($r = .13$, $p > .05$), and baptismal age ($r = .06$, $p > .05$) were not significantly correlated with spiritual well-being. The findings indicate that a person's spiritual well-being is not inherently affected by their gender, educational attainment, or age at which they are baptized.

Table 3

Pearson Correlation Matrix of Research Variables

	Spiritual wellbeing	Spiritual leadership	Leadership skills	Gender	Age	Educational level	Baptism age
Spiritual Well-being	-						
Spiritual leadership	.688**	-					
Leadership skills	.310**	.478**	-				
Gender	-.062	-.028	.098	-			
Age	.134*	.112	.007	-.144*	-		
Education level	.133	.091	.069	-.132*	.500**	-	
Baptism age	.060	.131*	.065	-.065	.446**	.328**	-

*Note. **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). Listwise N = 288*

Predictors of Spiritual Leadership Behaviors and Spiritual Well-being

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the influence of spiritual leadership behaviors on spiritual well-being. Table 4 shows the multiple regression model, indicating that spiritual leadership elements—exemplary life, sacrifice, compassion service, integrity, and calling explained a significant portion of the variance in spiritual well-being, $F(6, 286) = 51.741$, $p < .001$, Adjusted $R^2 = .510$. Table 4 also shows that the four coefficient estimates of the measures of spiritual leadership

have a positive effect on the spiritual well-being of congregants. Specifically, exemplary life ($\beta = .14$, $p < .01$), service ($\beta = .34$, $p < .01$), integrity ($\beta = .13$, $p < .05$), and calling ($\beta = .18$, $p < .01$).

The results also showed that spiritual leadership measures of service ($\beta = .34$) and sense of calling($\beta = .18$) were the strongest predictors of spiritual well-being. As Sanger (2020) reiterates, authentic spiritual leaders model Jesus Christ in their lives and lead others to a deep relationship with God (1 Corinthians 11:1).

In contrast, sacrifice and compassion did not significantly affect spiritual well-being ($\beta = .04$, $p > .05$ and $\beta = .09$, $p > .05$, respectively), contradicting previous studies (Benevene et al., 2023; Obi et al., 2021; Trzeciak et al., 2023). This means that, although compassionate leadership and sacrifice are positive leadership values, church members are generally positively impacted by their spiritual leaders' exemplary behavior and the extent to which they serve, are honest, and exhibit a high sense of calling.

Table 4

Multiple Regression Results for Spiritual
Leadership Measures

Model Summary			
R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.721[a]	.520	.510	.50761

ANOVA[a]					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F Value	p Value
Regression	79.991	6	13.332	51.741	<.001[b]
Residual	73.693	286	.258		
Total	153.684	292			

Coefficients[a]					
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t Value	p Value
Intercept	1.406	.117		12.011	<.001
Exemplary life	.087	.031	.143	2.800	.005
Sacrifice	.021	.031	.035	.686	.493
Compassion	.046	.025	.092	1.846	.066
Service	.268	.048	.340	5.601	<.001
Integrity	.085	.040	.130	2.102	.036
Calling	.116	.032	.183	3.670	<.001

Note. Dependent variable = spiritual well-being

Predictors of Leadership Skills and Spiritual Well-being

Table 5 reports the multiple regression results for the measures of leadership skills that predicted the spiritual well-being of the Seventh-day Adventist congregants in Rwanda. Leadership skills, measured by communication, spiritual caregiving, empowerment, and counseling, were regressed against spiritual well-being. The model summary in Table 5 indicates that 13% (adjusted R^2 = .13) of the variation in spiritual well-being can be explained by four variables: communication, spiritual caregiving, empowerment, and counseling. Furthermore, the ANOVA results suggest that the four variables were statistically significant, with $F(4, 306)$ = 12.528, $p < .001$, indicating a good fit of the regression model to the data.

Table 5 provides empirical evidence that spiritual caregiving (β = .21, $p < 0.05$) and counseling (β = .16, $p < 0.05$) are significant and positive predictors of spiritual well-being. A closer examination of Table 5 also reveals that spiritual caregiving is the most influential factor among the leadership skill measures in determining the spiritual well-being of congregants.

The metaphor of the Good Shepherd parable recorded in the biblical account (Luke 15:3-7; John 10:11-18) exemplifies the characteristics of a caring spiritual leader and a counselor. Such spirit-driven leadership empowers a congregation with faith and hope in God and enables individuals to act appropriately in matters of faith and morality (Obi et al., 2021). Although leadership communication and empowerment are important leadership skills, they appear to be insignificant for spiritual well-being. This suggests that spiritual well-being is not directly dependent on one's capacity to communicate effectively and empower others.

Table 5

Multiple Regression Results for Spiritual Leadership Measures

Model Summary			
R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.375[a]	.141	.129	.68065
ANOVA[a]					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F Value	p Value
Regression	23.216	4	5.804	12.528	<.001[b]
Residual	141.764	306	.463		
Total	164.980	310			
Coefficients[a]					
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t Value	p Value
(Constant)	2.027	.208		9.749	<.001
Communication	-.033	.067	-.042	-.496	.621
Spiritual caregiving	.189	.094	.211	2.019	.044
Empowerment	.066	.087	.076	.753	.452
Counselling	.101	.047	.163	2.134	.034

Note. Dependent variable = spiritual well-being

Predictors of Spiritual Well-being in Seventh-day Adventist Congregations in Rwanda

A crucial objective of this study was to determine the overall predictors of spiritual well-being in Seventh-day Adventist Congregations in Rwanda. Consequently, the regression model in Table 6 shows that the independent variables collectively explain a significant proportion of the variance in congregational spiritual well-being (F (6, 281) = 43.782, *p* <.001). The adjusted R^2 of 47% indicates that approximately 47% of the variability in spiritual well-being could be explained by spiritual leadership behaviors, leadership skills, and the demographic variables included in the model.

The regression coefficients of the individual predictors in Table 6 imply that only spiritual leadership behavior significantly predicted congregational spiritual well-being (β = .694, *p*< .001). This positive regression coefficient suggests that the spiritual well-being of congregants correspondingly improves as leaders exhibit positive leadership behaviors. This demonstrates the significance of spiritual leadership in followers' spiritual well-being (Jiang et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2019). This finding affirms prior research demonstrating a direct link between spiritual leadership and the spiritual well-being of congregations (Hutahayan, 2019; Purnomo et al., 2023). In his 2018 study on pastoral leadership and congregational vitality, Wollschleger discovered that a pastoral style characterized by collaboration, decisiveness, and inspiration positively affects congregational vitality. Conversely, a hands-off pastoral style has a negative impact (Abafi, 2020). Ilarius (2020) asserts that true spiritual leadership in a Christian context is an internal quality of the Spirit that requires self-control, faith, and courage to enhance positive influence. Thus, without strong competent leaders, congregations begin to decline (Wellman, 2008).

Table 6

Predictors of Spiritual Well-being

and spiritual well-being within a religious context. The results obtained in our study highlight the

Model Summary			
R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.695[a]	.483	.472	.52007

ANOVA[a]					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F Value	p Value
Regression	71.051	6	11.842	43.782	<.001[b]
Residual	76.003	281	.270		
Total	147.055	287			

Coefficients[a]					
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t Value	p Value
(Constant)	1.637	.215		7.623	<.001
Spiritual leadership	.590	.042	.694	14.042	<.001
Leadership skills	-.016	.046	-.017	-.341	.734
Gender	-.046	.063	-.031	-.719	.473
Age	.004	.004	.066	1.243	.215
Baptized Age	-.010	.007	-.073	-1.512	.132
Education	.038	.050	.038	.763	.446

Note. Dependent variable = spiritual well-being

Limitations and Directions of Future Research

The study has a few limitations that warrant attention in future research. Firstly, as a cross-sectional survey, the study suffers from a single-source bias, as the variables were measured from the same source (Seventh-day Adventist church members) and at a specific point in time. To obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships between these variables, future research should collect data at different points in time and from separate sources (e.g., church members and leaders). Additionally, the use of a self-reported measurement tool raises concerns about social desirability bias, which may have influenced the study's results. Future studies should employ various data collection approaches, such as experimental, qualitative, or mixed-method designs, to mitigate this issue.

Despite these limitations, our study is one of the few to empirically examine spiritual leadership behavior, leadership skills,

importance of conducting further research to replicate these findings and contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the field of spirituality.

Conclusion

Our study investigated perceptions of spiritual leadership behavior, leadership skills, and spiritual well-being in a congregation setting. The results showed that spiritual leadership, leadership skills, and age were significant correlates of spiritual well-being. More so, a spiritual leader's exemplary lifestyle, service attitude, perceived integrity, and calling are significant predictors of spiritual leadership. Further, spiritual caregiving and counseling were significant and positive predictors of spiritual well-being. Our results also highlighted the predictive effect of spiritual leadership on spiritual well-being.

We conclude that spiritual leadership in Seventh-day Adventist congregations in Rwanda is key to building the spiritual well-being of congregants. The alignment of a spiritual leader's

lifestyle and actions is crucial for fostering a positive influence on congregations. These insights underscore the need for spiritual leaders to exhibit genuine spiritual leadership qualities that positively impact their congregations.

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