

# Effect of Serving others on Spiritual Formation of Church members in Wolaita Sodo KHC

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**Abstract:** We live in an era where genuine spirituality is under question. There is spiritual decline among church members today. Serving others is one of the elements of ethical leadership that can bring spiritual formation of church members. However, lack of serving others set back the growth of spirituality among church members and results spiritual decline. The main purpose of this study is to explore the effect of serving others on the spiritual formation of church members in Wolaita Sodo Kale Heywet Church in Ethiopia. A study adopted a descriptive and explanatory design to explain the phenomena of Wolaita Sodo, KHC. Data was collected using both open-ended and closed-ended questionnaires from Wolaita Sodo KHC leaders, Pastors, Bible school teachers, evangelists and worship team members. The study examined the effect of serving others that contributes to spiritual formation of church members Wolaita Sodo KHC. This study provides a descriptive analysis of frequency result and a Chi square test including bar chart description. The result of the study presented in frequency analysis indicates that 89.8 percent serving others positively impacts church members to grow into Christ's likeness. Additionally, a Chi square test result (.000) indicates the result is highly significant level that serving others has effect on the spiritual formation of church members. To sum up, this study suggests that the research result provides evidence for further research studies in the study area.

**Key Terms:** Serving others, Spiritual formation, Ethical leadership, Church members

## I. Introduction

Serving others is expected to play a big role to bring spiritual formation of church members. The contemporary church members need spirituality because it is one of the important aspects that demand remedy. There are various definitions on spirituality. For instance, Coker (2021) and Teo (2017) define

spiritual formation as a lifelong process of growing into Christ's likeness. Additionally, Hilton (2023) defines spiritual formation as a process of sanctification in which Christians grow into Christlikeness. In this regard, serving others contribute to the process of spiritual formation of church members. Northouse (2016) describes, serving others is an ethical responsibility of leaders and it is one of the measurable elements of both ethical leadership and servant leadership. According to Robert Greenleaf (1970) as cited in Correll (2021), serving others is a natural feeling to help others first. Correll (2021) pointed out ten characteristics of servant leadership such as "listening, empathy, healing, self-awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people and building community" (Correll, 2021, p.2). Serving others is a mandate for the called leaders. For instance, Moses was called to lead of Israelites from Egypt to the Promised Land (NIV, Exodus, 3). All church members are called to love each other and to serve others (NIV, John, 13:34-35). Therefore, serving others will have effect in the process of spiritual formation of church members.

## II. Statement of the Problem

The church in 21<sup>st</sup> century is facing numerous challenges globally, regionally and nationally, (Crete et al., 2020; Knoetze, 2022; Tamirat, 2019). Some of the causes of these problems are cultural transformation, lack of faith, and rejection of absolute truth (Adeleke, 2019), growth of heresies, having doctrines of all kinds in the churches (Deual et al., 2019). There are much more moral deficiencies or spiritual decline in the churches today: lack of holiness, lack of faithfulness, lack of unity among church members, etc. If spiritual formation is not taking place, the future church no longer functions according to biblical teaching. In other words, spiritual death will take place (NIV, Revelation 3:1). Superficial Christianity will be increased. Church members become nominal Christians (Kim, 2021). The omission of the

great commission (Mathew, 28:19). Therefore, contemporary church members need spiritual formation urgently.

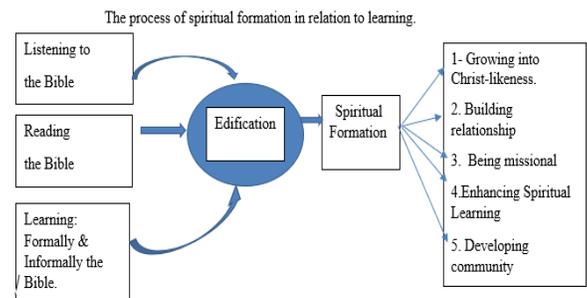
### III. The Concept of Serving others

Serving others is a voluntary sharing with others and is said to be taking care of others (Rao,2022). Serving others influences followers or beneficiaries at a global level both in the church context as well as in other sectors. According to Kauppila et al. (2022), the result of the study indicates that both perspectives of serving to help and helping to serve are a high performance of servant leaders, and these practices reinforce the indirect effects on organization members. According to the Great Commission of Jesus Christ in Mathew 28, disciples were sent out to preach the gospel, teach and make disciples of all nations. On the other word, disciples of Jesus Christ were called to serve others. Serving others will empower church members to grow up into Christ likeness. Additionally, based on the result of the study by Alexander (2022), willingness to serve others restores others' life and produces other members who are volunteering to serve others as well. This is an effect that how serving others can bring a great impact on the spiritual formation of church members. According to the Bible, the effect of serving others results in transformed lives (NIV, John 4: 7-30). In this regard, serving others includes providing both spiritual and physical needs for people it contributes church members to grow into Christ's likeness.

### IV. The Concept of Spiritual Formation

According to Ferreira (2021), the concept of spiritual formation is an individual experience of Christians who strives to grow and become Christ-likeness in their internal life (Ferreira, 2021). Besides, various studies define spiritual formation and give its meanings in different terms. For instance, Drexler and Bagby (2021) define spiritual formation as a biblically-guided process of growth. Other writers give the meaning to the term spiritual formation as a character formation or moral formation (Kretzschmar, 2020). In relation to leaders' spirituality, Kretzschmar (2020) describes the spiritual formation of leaders is a formation of leaders into Christ-likeness and living in an exemplary life. All church members including leaders need spiritual maturity because it can be displayed in "the person's growth in self—awareness, self-maturity (self-control), the proper use of freedom, being willing to take moral responsibility for one's action and generous self-giving" (Banksikiza,2001, as cited in Kretchmar, 2020, p.3). The Bible describes the process of spiritual formation that we are "like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (NIV, 1 Peter 2:5).

Spirituality is described as a practice of religion in which individual persons commit their lives to the divine and worship (Oginde, 2011). The term used in this study is to show the need for the devotional life experience of WKHC members with the creator God. True spirituality demands a commitment to communicate with God every day. Spirituality is a personal relationship with a sacred one (Crete et al., 2020). The process of spiritual formation includes learning the word of God, prayer, worship together with fellow Christians. The term used in this study is to explain the experiences of Wolaita Sodo KHC members that they devote themselves to and practice to grow in their spiritual lives. figure 1, shows that how spiritual formation can take place when there is learning.



### V. Literature Review

Various studies confirm that serving others has an impact on the followers at a global level both in the church context as well as in other sectors. In a relation to serving others, the study conducted in Indonesia aimed to investigate servant leadership and religiosity of the employees as performance indicator in the educational sector (Abbas, et al., 2020). The study used a sample of 323 respondents and data was collected through a survey questionnaire. The result through regression analysis suggested that the practice of servant leadership is serving others and it is a proactive predictor of employee performance. This study result indicates that serving others empowers followers for effective performance in their work settings. Additionally, the study conducted in the United States explored about servant leader and serving culture (Liden, et al., 2014). The study employed exploratory design and used a sample of 961 participants to collect data. The data was analyzed, and the result of a study indicates that serving culture in organization positively influences employee's performance. In the context church, serving others is the practice of servant leader that can bring effect of spiritual formation of church members.

According to Kauppila et al. (2022), the study conducted in Finland at Aalto University describes that serving others influences beyond supervisory relationships. Even though the research design was not clearly stated, the researchers used a systematic sampling method and collected the data from 667 store managers, 121-line managers, and 23 human resource managers. After analyzing the data, the result shows that serving others

reinforces followers and has effects on organization members. A study for the current study implies that serving others will affect the spiritual formation of church members. On the other hand, a lack of serving others results in no spiritual formation of church members.

Additionally, a study conducted at Liberty University in the USA by Alexander (2022) explored the volunteering service of workers. The study used approximately 92% of veterans' regard to community service. Data was collected through interviews and observation. The findings of the research show that volunteering provides opportunities to serve others and help Veterans transition and reintegrate back into civilian life. It is also better to recruit other veterans. Based on the result of the study, willingness to serve others restores others' lives and produces other members who are volunteering to serve others. The study implies that serving others will affect the spiritual formation of church members.

To sum up, based on the above literature review, it considerable that serving others play a great role to bring effect on the process of spiritual formation of church members.

### VI. Methodology

This study employed a descriptive and explanatory design. The aim of descriptive research is to describe the phenomenon and characteristics of individual and groups of people (Khalil, 2010; Kothari, 2004; Al Amaren, et al., 2020). Out of target population of 410, 41 respondents were selected using a stratified random sampling method. The sample population, 10 percent to 30 percent are acceptable by the scholars (Kombo and Tromp, 2006 as cited in Manyao, 2021). Additionally, a small sample size in a study helps to maintain the credibility of the result (Patton, 1990 as cited in Shaheen, et al. 2019). Therefore, questionnaires were distributed to 41 respondents and 39 were returned which is 95 percent response rate of the sample population. After receiving field data, a study sorted out, coded and then entered in SPSS Software before analyzing and presenting the results.

### VII. Results

A study provides a descriptive analysis of frequency result and a Chi square test including bar chart description and discusses the result. A study used five Likert Scale which is 1-Strongly disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- Neutral, 4- Agree, and 5- Strongly agree. The following section describes the results of gathered data and findings of the study. Based on the respondents' responses, the study presents a frequency analysis report that shows serving others is 89.8 percent positive impacts on spiritual formation of church members.

**Frequency Table :1**

Serving others is actively going on					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	5	3.9	3.9	3.9
	Disagree	28	21.9	21.9	25.8

Neutral	41	32.0	32.0	57.8
Agree	41	32.0	32.0	89.8
Strongly agree	13	10.2	10.2	100.0
Total	128	100.0	100.0	

**Frequency Table :2**

Source: (field data)

#### Church members are growing into Christ's likeness.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	14	10.9	10.9	10.9
	Disagree	27	21.1	21.1	32.0
	Neutral	53	41.4	41.4	73.4
	Agree	19	14.8	14.8	88.3
	Strongly agree	15	11.7	11.7	100.0
	Total	128	100.0	100.0	

Additionally, chi-square test shows that .000 significance level which is positive influence of independent variable (serving others) on dependent variable (spiritual formation or growing into Christ's likeness of church members).

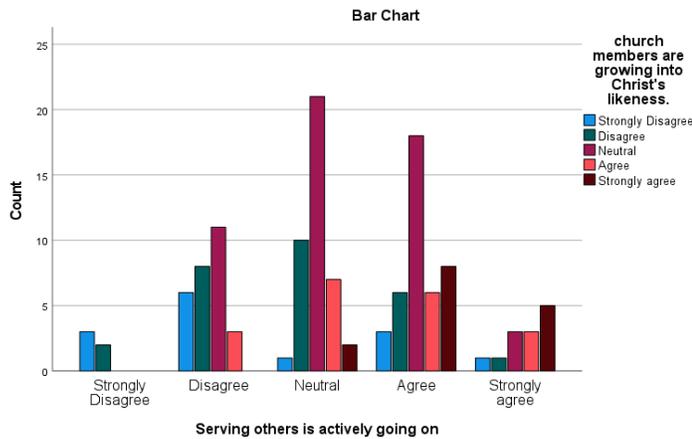
Table: 3

#### Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	42.394 <sup>a</sup>	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	41.472	16	.000
N of Valid Cases	128		

Source: (field data)

The study also analyzes also using bar chart and displayed based on Likert scale that both strongly disagree and disagree is lower than neutral, agree and strongly agree scale. The result indicated that serving others has a positive effect on the spiritual formation church members. See blow figure :1



Source: (field data)

### VIII. Conclusion

The result of previous studies indicates that there is spiritual decline in the contemporary churches and spirituality become full of problems in now a day's (Kretzschmar, 2020; Kim, 2021; Porter et al., 2019). The challenges of spirituality today demand ethical leadership which needs to play big role to solve the problem. Serving others is one of the elements or principles of ethical leadership which has a significant contribution in the process spiritual growth of church members. The result of this study confirms that serving others has a positive effect of spiritual formation of church members.

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