Addressing Power Struggles in African Ecclesiology Through Transformational Leadership Approaches

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Abstract
Power struggles have become a serious cankerworm that has eaten away at the foundations of African ecclesiological leadership. They have become a menace that possess a critical threat to African church leadership. Evidently, these struggles manifest in the form of self-ambition, personal interest, greed, excessive materialism, and unhealthy behaviour. Sadly, some individuals desperately pursue leadership positions not to fulfil responsibilities, but to satisfy their personal desires, which outrightly contradicts the biblical instructions of selfless leadership. The dynamics of power struggles are profoundly detrimental, posing significant threats to the well-being of individuals, undermining the integrity of the church and its clergy, and impeding the church's mission and its ability to fulfil its divine obligations. Ultimately, power struggles in African ecclesiology can be effectively addressed through transformational leadership approaches, which encompass servant leadership, inspiration and motivation, empathy and compassion, equipping and developing workers, inclusive decision making, effective communication and cooperation, conflict resolution and the concept of trumercomfort.

Key words: power struggles, African ecclesiology, Transformational leadership, and church leadership

Introduction

The ultimate focus of the church is growth, which encompasses numerical, spiritual, material, emotional, and intellectual. Some of the African churches have experienced tremendous growth and expansion over the years, while others are still struggling for rapid growth. In relation to this growth and struggles to grow, power struggles have become an increasingly influential and devastating phenomenon in African churches. Power struggles can be instrumental in restructuring church leadership. However, in African ecclesiology, these struggles often reveal self-aggrandizement, self-will, and ill-mannered attitudes. Unfortunately, some individuals pursue leadership positions for personal gain and material benefits, contradicting the biblical principles of selfless leadership.

Oftentimes, these power struggles are ignited by personal ambition, varied interest, competing desires, greed, economic instability, poverty, diverse spiritual development, beliefs or practices, and theological, ideological and cultural differences. The dynamics of power struggles are detrimental, posing a threat to human well-being and the church's integrity. They can deface the church, hinder its divine mission and obstruct the fulfilment of its goals and objectives

Moreover, the dynamics of power struggles in African ecclesiology can be addressed through transformational leadership approaches. These approaches include: Servant leadership, inspiration and motivation, empathy and compassion, equipment and development of workers, inclusive decision making, effective communication and cooperation, conflict resolution and the concept of Trumercomfort.

Overview of Power Struggles in African Ecclesiology

Power struggle is an act or habit of inherent competition and ill-mannered quest between two or more individuals for influence, control, or dominance over a position, resource, territory, authority, or other leadership issues. In relation to power struggles, Mangaliso Matshobane and Maake J. Masango assert "Power struggle is a phenomenon that affects various institutions that have a hierarchical system, be they governmental, business or religious. therefore, the church is not an exception when it comes to power struggles as much as this phenomenon affects all denominations of the church…"[1] Power struggles permeate certain organizations with stratified systems, both secular and sacred, of which the church is no exemption.

Power struggles have become a pervasive issue comparable to a global pandemic. It is pathetic that personal ambition and immaturity have led some gospel ministers to adopt worldly practices. Dishearteningly, some gospel ministers have compromised their values, engaging in inhumane acts and violating biblical standards. African ecclesiology has been marred by a disturbing trend, where power struggles driven by personal ambition and selfish desires have led to rampant lies, bribery, corruption, character assassination, certificate forgery, favouritism, tribalism, murder, and ritual activities.

Lary Cory asserts that in power struggles truth does not really matter, rather what it requires for one group to win. More so, only the negative aspect of the opponent is mentioned. Fault finding is what wins the struggle. There is nothing good from the opponent that is cited. Only their faults are emphasized repeatedly, if not they will not be defeated. Conversely, one's own weakness is not to be spoken about. Eventually, whatever it takes to win the struggle is permitted: falsehood, overstatement, misguided criticism, turmoil, aggression and assassination.[2]These actions undermine the spiritual calling of gospel ministers and also violate biblical principles and leadership ethics.

Regrettably, the church has been severally eroded by strife, opposition, partisan spirit, lovelessness, and conflicts, ultimately jeopardizing its unity, mission and development. Similarly, qualified ministers were unfairly denied opportunities, while faithful ones faced undue suffering, diminishing their trust in church leadership and authority. This raise questions about whether righteousness still exalts a nation, as the Bible teaches (Prov. 1434). Consequently, the church's credibility was compromised, causing the world to lose faith and trust in the church and its clergy. Addressing power struggles in African ecclesiology is both inevitable and urgent. Ignoring these issues can hinder the church's divine mandate, frustrate genuine ministers, entangle the church in spiritual bondage, and undermine its role as a refuge and sanctuary.

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[1] Mangaliso Matshobane; Maake J. Masango, "Understanding Power Struggles in the Pentecostal Churches," in *HTS Theological Studies*, Herv. Teol. Stud. Vol. 74 n.l Pretoria (2018), https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v74i1.4949. (accessed February 22, 2025).

[2] Lary cory, "The Silent War in the Church: A winnable War W Must not Ignore," (2018), https://essential40.com/the=silent-war/tsw-5.html (accessed January 26, 2025).

Biblical Perspective of Power Struggles

Biblical teachings against strife, conflicts and selfish ambition are highlighted by Apostle Paul in this passage- "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interest, but also for the interests of others…." (Philippians 2:3-4, NKJV.) The vices mentioned here are indeed the foundational elements of powers struggles. Selfish interest, pride and a sense of superiority are common factors that foster power struggles within the church. Bruce Barton asserts, "Selfish ambition (vain glory) can ruin a church, but true humility can build it. Being humble (lowliness of mind) means having a true perspective on ourselves. "[3] Moreover, esteeming others more than oneself, which embodies humility, is a crucial factor in preventing pride and mitigating power struggles in African ecclesiology.

Korah's rebellion against Moses' leadership (Numbers 16) is one of the biblical examples of power struggles. This portion highlights the hazards of powers struggles and the inevitability of humility, both from the leadership and its subjects. Barton emphasizes that Korah and his colleagues had witnessed the benefit of priesthood in Egypt. Egyptian priests possessed great wealth and political influence, which Korah really desired. He probably thought that Israelite priesthood would be such political device, without knowing that Moses's objective was to render services to God and not to exert dominance on people.[4] The rebellion of Korah stemmed from selfish ambition, greed and pride, which are common factors that promote power struggles. Any life that lacks humility is never a good material for an effective ecclesiastical leadership.

Similarly, the teachings of Jesus Christ in the below passage portray servanthood, emerging from humility, as the prerequisite for effective leadership - "But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you, but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant'" (Mark 10:42,43). Jesus' teachings aim at exploring the distinction or the nexus between worldly leadership and ecclesiastical leadership.

Worldly leadership is characterized by dominance, selfish interest, and ambition, while ecclesiastical leadership is attributed to humility and servanthood. Litle wonder, the former results to power struggle and the later leads to effective leadership. In relation to this, Bruce emphasizes, "Business, organizations, and institutions measure greatness by personal achievement. In Christ's kingdom, however, service is the way to get ahead. The desire to be on top will hinder, not help. Rather than seeking to have your needs met, look for ways you can minister to the needs of others."[5] Servanthood is inevitably a ladder for greatness, and a bedrock for Christian leadership formation.

Historical Context of Power Struggles in African Churches

Pre-colonial Era

Power struggles existed during the pre-colonial era among African Christian kingdoms and empires. Particularly, this involved Ethiopian Empires, Kingdom of Kongo and kingdom of Axum. The struggles here were between monarchs and church leaders over the issues of leadership

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[3] Bruce Barton, *Life Application Study Bible*: USA: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1996),2367.

[4] Ibid,289.

[5] Bruce, 1909.

influence and control.[6] The quest for power, influence, and leadership control between civil rulers and religious rulers ought to be like two transversal lines that cannot meet, because these are two distinct institutions. However, when animality rises in humans, abnormality becomes the enforced norm. Consequently, when abnormality becomes the norm, danger looms around the corner. Little wonder power struggles even ravaged relationships between monarchs and church leaders.

Another threat of power struggles against Christians was external, and it emerged from the Islamic conquests. They used military campaign to expand their territories. They constantly engaged themselves in battles to root out people around them: a strategy which affected Christianity greatly, especially in the northern Africa.[7] This has been the strategy of Islam against Christianity which has been ongoing even at the present era.

In relation the emergence of Islam, John S. Mbit submits that they did not emerge to defeat by the teaching of love in which Christianity enhances, but by manipulation and sword. They spread over Egypt and North Africa under a century. Islam almost eliminated Christianity in various places. However, there was a remnant of Christianity in Egypt. It took some centuries before Christianity faded in Sudan, but Islam could not conquer Christianity in Ethiopia[8]. The problem with power struggle is that it craves dominance, control and influence, enslaving everyone in its grip. Otherwise, it would not have existed between these two institutions. Ultimately, Christianity and Islam have distinct objectives, faith, teachings and practices that do not align.

Colonial Era
1. Missionary Control

During the pre-colonial and colonial periods, power struggles existed in churches as a result of missionary control. The western missionaries stumbled into Africa with a gospel of Christ, but wrapped in western cultures. No wonder some of African people called it a "white man gospel." According to Mnyalaza T. Masuku, "Western missions dressed Christ in their own cultures before taking him to Africa. Hill-Fletcher was on point when she indicated that 'conversion to Christianity made people appear to be 'whiter'. This meant that they were 'whiter' in terms of being forced to embrace white Western Christian culture."[9] The Westerners condemned everything about Africa, including their ideology, worldview, way of life and their worship styles. They hijacked ecclesiastical authority and leadership as a result of their inherent quest and incest for dominance, influence and control over everything. Certain attempts to oppose this indirect colonization was termed arrogance and disloyalty to church leadership. This singular act raised alarm and serious tension that metamorphosed to conflicts and uproar, and power struggles.

The Western missionaries did not only deprive Africans the rights and privileges of expressing and upholding their identity and heritage, they also made them feel they had nothing in their brains by compelling them to embrace the gospel repackaged in European culture. Masuku, Quotes Udeani who says "Western Christianity with its fully developed systems of doctrines and institutions based on Eurocentric historical circumstances was imposed on these races. Though the

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[6] John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion.* (Nairobi: Heinemann, 1975). 185

[7] Mbiti, 186.

[8] Ibid

[9] Mnyalaza T. Masuku, "Mistakes of Western Christian Missions in Africa and Related Response, Mid - 19th to20th Century" in *Verbum Et Ecclesia , vol 44, no 1 (2023),* https://verbumetecclesia.org.za/index.php/ve/article/view/2746/6609 (accessed February 1, 2025).

mandate for mission 'Go to make disciples of all nations…' came from Christ, injunction was understood to mean effectively 'go make Europeans of all nations'"[10] The Western missionaries' racist biases led to cultural egoism and antagonism towards African churches. As a result, the gospel they preached was tailored to suit their own culture, undermining its effectiveness among Africans. This further fuelled power struggles between Western missionaries and African churches.

Post- Colonial

During the post -colonel era, power struggles emanated from issues like Western resistance to indigenous leadership, missionaries' control of financial resources, cultural impositions and church governance[11]. All these and more were part of colonial strategies employed to deprive Africans from partaking in church leadership. Etim E. Okon quotes Michael Crowder who highlights that the Christian Europe who eradicated the slave trade saw themselves superior to the uncivilized Africa. This issue of moral superiority was solidified by the ideology of racial superiority, which classified the white person at the top in hierarchy and the black person at the bottom. The colonial authority did not see it improper to dominate and govern Africans in their own land.[12] The above colonial strategy was used in the church by the Western missionaries to deprive indigenous leaders from taking part in leadership roles or in decision making in African churches. African churches began to assert their independence with African leaders taking control.

Contemporary Era

Contemporary era seems to encompass several kinds of strategies and spark of powers struggles, including that of pre-colonial and colonial periods. There is an emergence of numerous churches (both foreign and local), and divisions of churches.[13] These might act as responses to the colonial administration of foreign missionaries. Mbiti acknowledges another main issue that confronts Christianity in Africa as innumerable church break off, denominations, groups and sects. Some of which were foreign and some local. Most of the local ones began as a result of their unwillingness to submit to foreign denominations, personal interest for power, desire to contextualize Christianity and other purposes.[14] However, the problem is not only the numerical increase of denominations, but the increase of wrong strategies that engender power struggles and retard the objectives and spiritual growth of the church.

Causes of Power Struggles in African Churches
1. Corruption and abuse of power

Corruption and abuse of power seem to be aged long factors of powers struggles in African churches. Some church leaders are so corrupt that their ideologies, worldview and characters are affected. They employ all kinds of strategies to ensure that their positions are intact, even when their subjects do not want them anymore. Asamoah-Gyadu exerts "With the breakdown of traditional systems of care, respect for ancestral values regarding the use of

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[10] Ibid.

[11] Etim E. Okon, "Christian Missions and Colonial Rule in Africa: Objective and Contemporary Analysis", 202/203, HTTPs: eujournal.org/in-depth/esi/articles/view/3557/3397. (Accessed February 4, 2025).

[12] Ibid.

[13] Mbit, 184

[14] Ibid

natural resources and in the modern context, disregard for fundamental human rights, wealth in Africa has led to the abuse of power and corruption, particularly in politics."[15] Corrupt leaders neither have any regard for communal values, moral standard nor fundamental human right. They stamped all of these, just to fulfil their desires. Some of the African churches remain in constant power struggles as a result of corruption and abuse of power in leadership.

2. Personal Ambition and Selfish Interest

Personal ambition and selfish interest are major factors that foster power struggles in African churches. Some people earnestly crave for power in other to fulfil their selfish interest. As a matter of fact, they assume positions to achieve their ambitions and personal interests, and not to fulfil responsibilities. Conversely, Carey Nieuwhof emphasizes, "Great leaders aren't driven by personal ambition; they are driven by the mission. They know that ambition is a terrible substitute for mission."[16] Anyone that is driven by ambition has already lost the focus of leadership, which is mission oriented, for true leadership is mission-driven and not ambition-driven.

Nieuwhof observes ten signs to identify that one is driven by ambition as: "You're way too tied to results", "failure seems terrifying", "you're far more focused on breadth than depth", "you use people", "you love to take credit", "you have a hard time admitting fault", "It's really hard to say no", "you feel entitled to success", "winning is more important than loving", and "you're always insecure."[17] Similarly ambition can be dictated in a person in these seven ways: when they project themselves more than others, see themselves more important and qualified than others, prioritize personal interest than the interest of others, overlook their faults and blab that of other people, defend their weaknesses and even present them as strengths , and are concerned in their success and safety but do not care if others perish, and feel too big to yield to their mistakes and to say sorry.

3. Quest for Position, Influence and Leadership Control

Several positions in the church were accepted by early Christians with awe, reverence and fear. In those days in Assemblies of God Church, those who were elected or appointed into the leadership wept for a feeling of unworthiness, but right now both there and in other denominations, some people politic, campaign and even use dubious means just to win or occupy certain viable positions. In relation to this Ikechukwu Nnochiri says "The crisis rocking Assemblies of God Church, AGC, worsened weekend, as members of a branch of the church in Abuja clashed over two senior pastors laying claim to the District Superintendent's position."[18] Power struggle is a ridiculous act, which ought not to be mentioned among members, not to talk of church leaders.

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[15] J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu "Poverty, Wealth and Social Justice in Africa," *Religions: A Scholarly Journal*, *Volume 2012, Issue2*, (Dec 2012):58. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5339/rels.2012.justice13 (Accessed February, 2025).

[16] Carey Nieuwhof , "How to identify Selfish Ambition in your Leadership," (Nov. 7, 2019), https//outreachmagazine.com/features/leadership/48573-how-to-identify-selfish-ambition-in-your-leadership.html (Accessed February 15, 2025).

[17] Nieuwhof.

[18] Ikechukwu Nnochiri, "Assemblies of God Church Factions Clash in Abuja" (August 6,2028),1. https://www.vanguardngr.cum/2018/8/assemblies-of-god--church-factions-in-abuja/ (accessed April 17, 2024).

4. Materialism and Greed

Materialism is an excessive quest for material things in expense of spiritual quality and relationship. Materialism poses a serious challenge on African Christianity. Materialism has led to power struggles in the church leadership. Most of these people do not look for these positions to fulfil responsibilities or to carry out the duties involved, but the material opportunities are usually been targeted. It is factual that majority of those who make material things their focus in all areas are guilty of materialism.

In relation to power struggles in the church, John Chuks Azu says, "Supporters of the factions of the Assemblies of God Church in Abuja last weekend classed over the leadership tussle in the church. The factions exchanged words in a heated conflict at the premises of the church at Wuse zone 5, Abuja over the position of District Superintendent."[19] There is nothing that undermines the integrity of the church like applying worldly strategies in pursuit for ecclesiastical position. It is a serious alienation from the biblical teachings. True leadership should be an embodiment of peace, unity and serene atmosphere, counteracting partisan spirit, rancour and a state of pandemonium. Ultimately, when material things are placed in focused, there is bound to be certain absurdities like power struggles and the like in the church leadership.

5. Deviation and Loss of Goal

Deviation and loss of goal are significant factors that have led to power struggles in African churches. A mere consideration of the lifestyles, ideologies, methodologies and ambitions of some ministers who struggle for power in African churches unveils a total deviation and loss of divine goal. There is nothing that debilitate the integrity of a Christian leader like deviation and loss of divine goal. Emiola Nihinlola asserts, "There is a loss of prophetic edge in the land. Many preachers and prophets have abandoned biblical teaching on truth, righteousness, justice, holiness, and purity. Rather than focus on Kingdom lifestyles (Mat 5-7), to please God, emphasis has shifted to power, success, blessing, victory, and breakthrough."[20] Any moment one allows a paradigm shift to occur from divine assignments to material acquisitions, one not only disfavours humanity but also dishonours divinity. In respect of that, any desire, interest, quest, activity, lifestyle or actions that compel godly people to deviate or stray from their divine goals, should be jettisoned, because they foster power struggles in African ecclesiology.

Consequences of Power Struggles

Consequences of power struggles can be characterized thus: deviation, loss of goal, disunity, enmity, hatred, concealing of truth, lies, hypocrisy, dishonesty, immorality, bullying, character assassination, betrayal, trampling others to win positions, loss of integrity, untimely death, and eternal peril. In relation to consequences of power struggles, a unanimous author laments,

> What are the results of these types of power struggles? One wins and the
> other side loses may seem to be the only outcome. But the true outcome is
> that we lose. Here are some of the ways we lose: divisions increase and
> walls between us grow taller, lines of communications are destroyed; hatred
> replaces forgiveness and compassion; and understanding and empathy

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[19] John Chuks Azu, " Two Factions Over Leadership in Assemblies of God Church" (August 6, 2018),2. https://dailytrust.com/two-factions-clash-over-leadership-in-asemblies-of-god-264441/ (accessed April 17,2024).

[20] Emiola Nihinlola, *Theology Under the Mango Tree* (Ogbomoso: Publishing Unit, NBTS,2013),149.

toward each other is replaced by bigotry toward those on the other side of the power struggles.[21]

Power struggles create boundaries, pillars and pinnacles in relationships, break bonds of allies, place studs on opponents, and masks on friends, treating them as foes and aliens.

The Benefits of Power Struggles

Indubitably, power struggles actually have numerous detriments to both secular and Christian leaderships, however, there are several advantages of power struggles, if handled meticulously. Power struggles can reveal pitfalls in an organization, critique bad governance, sound an alarm of deviation and departure from organizational goals and objectives, check and balance bad leadership, inspire transformation in an organization, inject corrective measures, strengthen lapses in an administration, and lead to better governance in leadership.

A unanimous author submits, "Power struggles in executive teams can be detrimental to the success of your organization; however, they can also be opportunities for growth, learning, and innovation."[22] Some bad leaderships hardly submit to transformation without power struggles. Power struggles could be highly instrumental in leaderships when they are intended to correct anomalies, inspire transformative principles, promote selfless governance, and foster organizational goals and objectives without self-aggrandizement and selfish interests and ambition.

Addressing Power Struggles through Transformational Leadership Approaches

Power struggles have seriously plagued the African churches, both internally and externally: internally, there is a loss of genuine love, honesty, unity, and relationship between members and church leaders; externally, the public community have lost their trust and dependence on the church and its clergy. The church should arise to address power struggles which seem to undermine its relevance. Stephen Victor Coertze affirm that it is the responsibility of the church to address the issues with which it is grappling. He quotes Buhlmann who suggests that the more the church goes after its assignments in the world, the easier it conquers internal issues. [23] Addressing power struggles is imperative and should be done immediately.

It is significant to address power struggles in African churches with transformational leadership approaches, not only that these approaches will checkmate bad leadership and alleviate power struggles in church leadership, they will also foster effective leadership in African ecclesiology. Transformational Leadership approaches used to address power struggles in African ecclesiology include the following:

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[21] N.A."How Can you Identify and Adress Power Struggles in Executive Teams?" (2015), https://www.linkin.com/advice/0/how-can-you-identify-address-power-struggles-qusfe (accessed February 6, 2025).

[22]N.A.

[23] Stephen Victor Coertze "Challenges Facing the African Church: South African Theologians Speak Out (April2005), https//www.google.com/search? =power+struggles+on+African+churches+from+colonial+to+contem porary+periods&oq (accessed February 14,2025).

Servant Leadership

Servant leadership is a leadership approach that emphasizes the role of a leader for their followers, prioritizing their well-being and growth above everything else, and aligning their leadership with that of Christ. Servant leadership is about servanthood. It is a servant-like attitude, which gears towards serving others than being served. Power struggles reign in African churches day by day, because some leaders do not possess the servant heart, rather their focus is to be served and not to serve. According to Charles P. Pfeiffer, Howard F Vos and John Rea, "Periodically, the leader must be a servant, even while he is a ruler and a teacher (Mat 20:26-27)."[24] Leadership is about serving people and not ruling them. It is a structure that focuses on the people and not on oneself. This is a biblical teaching. Akinwale Oloyede says, "The Bible is the sure source of guidance…."[25] Any life that negates the Bible can misguide. One of the reasons for power struggles is that some leaders aim at fulfilling their personal interests, instead of that of their followers. This does not provide any guidance.

One of the reasons for power struggles is that some leaders aim at fulfilling their personal interests, instead of that of their followers. Power struggles in African churches can be checked when servant leadership approach is applied. This is because it appropriates with Christ's teaching on leadership and also fulfils God's glory. Emiola Nihinlola opines that a servant leader is the one who responds to opportunities which lead to glorifying God, develop people and fulfil the Kingdom purpose in an organization.[26] Leadership is bound to experience power struggles, unless it gears towards serving people, transforming them and fulfilling kingdom purposes.

Inspiration and Motivation

Huma beings inherently incline to motivation. It is always a huge task to measure the ability of followers when no assignment is delegated, but that becomes easier when there is a leader with an ability to inspire and motive. Joel Bulus Haruna asserts, "Transformational leaders know how to encourage, inspire and motivate employees to perform in ways that create meaningful change."[27] Inspiring motivation on followers is very significant and effectively enables employees to demonstrate their initiative and foster organizational growth. David Andrews affirms that "A transformational leadership styles inspire employees to strive beyond required expectations to work toward a shared vision…."[28] Motivation in leadership is an energizing force that enables employees to go beyond expectations and fulfil organizational goals. Motivation eliminates power struggles in leadership and empowers employees to attain remarkable achievements.

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[24] Charles P. Pfeiffer et all, *Wyclif Commentary Bible* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005),1022.

[25] Akinwale Oloyede, Introduction to Christian Theology in African context (Osogbo: House celebrity Publishers, 2023),73.

[26] Nihinlola, 216.

[27] Joel Bulus Haruna, " The Effect Transformational Leadership on Church Growth in Nigeria" (2022)https://www.google.com/search?q=addressing+power+struggles+in+Africa+churches+with+transforamationa l+leadership+approach&oq+addressing+power+struggles+in+African+churches+withtransformational+leadersip+ap proach&gs-lcrp= (accessed February 8, 2025).

[28] - David Andrews, ed. "What is Transportational Leadership? Understanding the Impact of Inspirational guidance" (University of Massachusetts Glopbal, California) (2021) https://www.umasglobal-edu/news-and-events/blg/what-is-transformational-leadership (accessed February 9, 2025)

Empathy and Compassion

Empathy is the ability to place oneself in the situation of another person, sharing their feelings and understanding their experiences, whether good or bad. Moreover, compassion is an expression of care and concern for other people's conditions, and willingness to proffer solutions to their problems in a kind and empathetic manner. Lack of empathy and compassion of some leaders make power struggles to thrive in African churches. Iruoma quotes Okpara Inwerogu who opines that "the leader since he works with people, should have love which means empathy and compassion towards the group members. He should be tolerant, that is being able to put up with strange manners of people."[29] The ability of a leader in demonstrating empathy and compassion helps to curb or alleviate power struggles within African ecclesiology.

Equipment and Development of Workers

Equipment and development of workers involve training, preparing and empowering them to recognize and maximize their potentials for the benefit of the organization. One of the reasons people struggle for power is due to a lack of proper orientation and in-dept knowledge of what leadership entails. When followers are properly equipped and developed, they will see powers struggles as evil. If power struggles are to be eliminated in the church, leaders have to make equipping workers a responsibility. When followers are properly equipped and developed, they will see powers struggles as evil. Omolara Abosede Areo, says "Leadership is the ability of a leader to use influential power to change the attitude, beliefs and actions of followers without force."[30] While helping people to acknowledge their potentials, their lives need to be changed. It is part of equipment. "Effective leadership moves beyond encouraging participation to actual empowerment of others."[31] Struggles rarely exit where people are properly empowered.

Equipping is a difficult job more than shepherding. Leaders have the responsibility of equipping others. This calls for giving them gifts, which involves caring for them (communicate, confirm and show example), trust the ownership of the ministry on them, become a source of solutions to people's problems (providing environment, mentoring, assistance, and equipment), make goals clear, remove impediments, acknowledge their efforts, and appreciate them.[32] Equipping and developing workers go beyond giving them training needed for their services, they equally include empowering them, making them relevant to the organization and appreciating their efforts. These are the factors that prevent powers struggles.

Inclusive Decision Making

One of the reasons powers struggles exist in some African churches is because some leaders do not carry their followers along in decision making. Joel Bulus Haruna says, "Transformational leaders carry the followers along, in the decision making which promote peace and harmony in the church[33]. People are bound to experience peaceful atmosphere when followers are carried along during decision making.

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[29] Iheanyi Iruoma, *Applied Church Administration*, (Owerri: Okson Publishers, 2003),162.

[30] Omolara Abosede Areo, *Strategic Christian Parenting*. (Ogbomoso: Kingdom Impact Publishing Media Ltd.,2021), 321.

[31] David J. Atkinson et al, New *Dictionary of Christian Ethics & Pastoral Theology*/ (Nottingham, England: Intervarsity Press, 1995), 616.

[32] Iruoma,55.

[33] Joel Bulus Haruna.

Effective Communication and Cooperation

Power struggles thrive in church leadership as a result of lack of communication and cooperation. Some leaders are not patient enough to listen in details, communicate their intensions and harmoniously relate with their followers. John C. Maxwell says

> As the leader of a team or an organization, you set the tone for communication. A leader's communication must be consistent, clear, and courteous. But leaders must also be good listeners. When leaders don't listen…they stop gaining wisdom, they stop "hearing" what isn't being said, team members stop communicating and their indifference begins to spread to others areas.[34]

 Communication and cooperation create a significant measure that control powers struggles or make them ineffective. However, a bridge of communication and cooperation is a desertion of wisdom and valid information. John Stott declares, "An Important element of partnership is giving information to employees about the business and, moreover, consulting them about it."[35] Communication involves information, and where it is lacking power struggles may not be absent.

Conflict Resolution

Conflict is a rivalry or disagreement between people with divergent views and ideas. It is the inability of individuals to come to a compromise. According to Nadine Hamadou, "Conflict is contest between people with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values or goals. It is present when parties perceive that their interests are incompatible, express hostile attitudes or pursue their interests through actions that may damage the other parties."[36] Conflicts exist when one party refuses to yield to the opinion of the other, and this may lead to destruction of relationships. On the contrary, conflict can create opportunities for better governance, if properly handled.

Moreover, inability to provide a resolution to conflict creates room for power struggles in African churches. Hamadou asserts, "The challenge facing governments is not the elimination of conflict, but rather how to effectively address conflict when it arises". Conflict resolution is a significant way to address powers struggles. It eliminates every element of power struggles within individuals.

Trumercomfort in Leadership

Trumercomfort is a theological concept formulated by integrating the essential elements of truth, mercy, and comfort. This concept provides a unique framework for understanding the biblical narrative, from Genesis to Revelation, as a cohesive message that embodies these three core principles. By examining the scriptures through the lens of Trumercomfort, one can discern the alignment of truth, mercy, and comfort throughout the biblical story.

Ecclesiastical leadership is an embodiment of truth, mercy and comfort. The writer introduces the concept of "Trumercomfort" as one of the transformational leadership approaches

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[34] John C. Maxwell, *A Leader's Heart.* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc., 2010), 71.

[35] John Stott, *Issues Facing Christians today 4th Edition* .(Grand Rapids Michigan: Zondervan, 2006), 301.

[36] Nadine Hamadou, the role of Leadership in conflict Resolution" in Journal of Conflict Management, Vol 3, issue 1, pp. 52 (University of Douala, Cameroon, 2023), https://www.google.com/searching=conflict+in+leadership/

to address the dynamics of power struggles in African ecclesiology. He posits that ecclesiastical leadership should embody truth, aligning its principles, standards, and practices with biblical teachings. A leadership grounded in truth cannot employ strategies that contradict biblical principles.

He argues that worldly methods and malpractices must be negated by a commitment to biblical truth. Dan Vis notes, "Truth is important because it changes life.…the more truth we know, the more freedom we experience."[37] Truth transforms leaders and their followers. Trumercomfort emphasizes the importance of truth-based leadership in African ecclesiology, rejecting worldly power struggles and promoting a biblical approach to leadership.

Mercy is a vital component of effective ecclesiastical leadership. A leadership that embodies mercy creates space for people's faults, weaknesses, and incompetence, acknowledging human fallibility and unworthiness. Moreover, an ecclesiastical leadership should embody mercy, considering the conditions and limitations of those they lead. This merciful approach is rooted in love and forgiveness, acknowledging that followers are human and prone to mistakes. Any leadership devoid of the nature and form of mercy can never genuinely express forgiveness to its subjects. In this sense, such leadership is capable of fuelling power struggles and should be abrogated or jettisoned.

This expression of mercy manifests as compassion for those in trouble, need, or seeking forgiveness for wrongdoing. By recognizing and responding to human frailty, merciful leadership fosters healthy interpersonal relationships, promoting a culture of empathy, understanding, and support. Ultimately, a merciful approach to leadership is incompatible with power struggles, rather creating an atmosphere of peace and cooperation.

An ecclesiastical leadership should also be an embodiment of comfort. A leadership that does not produce solutions, courage, succour, or cure to the problems and needs of its subjects is not worth existing. A genuine ecclesiastical leadership provides comfort by focusing on the needs of the people, offering solutions, succour, courage, and cure to their problems. This leadership prioritizes the congregation's well-being, rather than self-interest.

Conclusion

Power struggles in African ecclesiology is fuelled by greed, personal ambition, and selfish-interest. It has created rancour, strife, disunity and loss of integrity among ministers of the gospel. It has equally led to loss of cooperation between church leaders and their followers, and equally made the world to lose their confidence and trust on the church and its clergy. However, the dynamics of power struggles in African ecclesiology can be addressed through transformational leadership approaches. These approaches are capable of effectively curbing or alleviating the problem of powers struggles because they align with Christ's teachings on leadership.

Church leaders in Africa should know that the church belongs to God, as well as its leadership. Anyone that handles its affairs in a way that does not align with His established principles and will does not only project themselves as His enemy, but is also in a verge of incurring His wrath. Church leadership is never ambition- drive, self-centered, materialism targeted and dominance demonstrated, it is rather mission-driven, people-centered, obligation-fulfilled and servanthood-applied.

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[37] Dan vis "The Importance of Truth" (May 9, 2022), https: www.festmissions.com/aticle/importance-of-truth (Accessed februar 23, 2025)

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