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The Influence of Biblical Pastoral Leadership on Congregational Attendance: A Case From a Pentecostal Congregation

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of biblical pastoral leadership, based on 1 Peter 5:1–4, on congregational attendance within a Pentecostal church in Indonesia. Using a quantitative correlational design, data were collected from 155 members of GPdI Haleluya Rungkut Surabaya through a Likert-scale questionnaire assessing perceptions of pastoral leadership and levels of worship participation. Statistical analyses using SPSS 26 revealed a very strong positive correlation between perceived pastoral leadership and attendance frequency ($r = 0.891$, $p < 0.0001$), with 79.4 percent of the variance in attendance explained by leadership perception ($R^2 = 0.794$). Subgroup analysis indicated that members aged 41–50 and those with 7–10 years of membership showed the highest levels of engagement. The findings confirm that servant-oriented and transformational leadership—embodying humility, integrity, and example—significantly enhances congregational commitment. Theologically, the results affirm that pastoral leadership grounded in the shepherd model of 1 Peter 5:1–4 produces measurable behavioral outcomes in the life of the church. Practically, the study highlights the need for leadership formation that integrates biblical character, relational authenticity, and visionary guidance to sustain church vitality within the Indonesian Pentecostal context.

1. Introduction

The quality of its pastoral leadership has a profound influence on the vitality and sustainability of a local church. In Christian communities, particularly within Pentecostal and evangelical traditions, pastoral leadership functions not only as a managerial role but also as a spiritual vocation that shapes the moral, emotional, and theological climate of the congregation (Anderson, 2013; Barna, 2017). Effective pastoral leadership is a multifaceted construct involving

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spiritual guidance, relational engagement, administrative competence, and moral example. When exercised according to biblical principles, such leadership promotes spiritual maturity, fosters unity, and enhances consistent participation in worship and ministry (Banks & Ledbetter, 2004; Fry & Kriger, 2009).

In the context of Indonesia's dynamic religious landscape, Pentecostalism has experienced remarkable growth since the early twentieth century (Parker, 2011). This expansion is attributed not only to the movement's charismatic theology but also to its emphasis on personal transformation and community participation through vibrant worship practices. However, many local congregations continue to struggle with irregular attendance and fluctuating levels of member engagement. The sustainability of these congregations depends significantly on the pastor's capacity to shepherd with authenticity, humility, and relational closeness. Within this context, the present study examines the relationship between pastoral leadership quality and congregational attendance at Gereja Pantekosta di Indonesia (GPdI), specifically at Haleluya Rungkut, Surabaya.

1.1 Background of the Study

Pastoral leadership in Pentecostal settings is typically rooted in a relational and charismatic model, emphasising spiritual authority derived from divine calling and moral credibility (Kgatle, 2018). However, leadership crises and declining attendance in some churches have raised questions about the extent to which biblical principles of shepherding are being implemented effectively. The apostle Peter, in 1 Peter 5:1–4, provides a foundational text for understanding pastoral responsibility. He exhorts elders to shepherd the flock of God willingly, not under compulsion or for personal gain, but with eagerness and as examples to the believers. This passage encapsulates the heart of servant leadership—leadership that serves rather than dominates, guides rather than coerces, and models faith rather than demands conformity (Green, 2007; Wright, 2012).

In many modern congregations, the pressures of institutional maintenance, administrative tasks, and performance expectations can distort the pastoral vocation into managerial professionalism. When leadership becomes impersonal or authoritarian, congregants may disengage, perceiving the church as a hierarchical organization rather than a spiritual family (Cladis, 1999; Nouwen, 1989). Conversely, when pastors embody the spirit of 1 Peter 5:1–4—serving with humility, empathy, and integrity—they inspire greater loyalty and spiritual participation among members. Thus, the biblical model of pastoral leadership may have measurable sociological outcomes, such as increased attendance and greater commitment.

1.2 Problem Statement

Despite the centrality of pastoral leadership in church growth theory, few empirical studies have quantitatively examined the relationship between perceived leadership quality and congregational attendance, particularly within the Indonesian Pentecostal context. While qualitative and theological discussions abound (e.g., Cole, 2015; Anderson, 2013), there remains a lack of data-driven research that links leadership principles derived from Scripture with measurable behavioral indicators such as worship attendance. This study seeks to bridge that gap by employing a quantitative survey design to analyze the influence of pastoral leadership quality, as perceived by congregants, on their attendance patterns at GPdI Haleluya Rungkut.

1.3 Research Objectives and Questions

The primary objective of this study is to determine the extent to which the perceived quality of pastoral leadership, grounded in the biblical principles outlined in 1 Peter 5:1–4, influences congregational attendance behaviour. Specifically, the study aims to examine congregants' perceptions of pastoral leadership at GPdI Haleluya Rungkut and to assess the correlation between perceived quality of pastoral leadership and attendance frequency.

Accordingly, the central research question is: How does biblical pastoral leadership, as described in 1 Peter 5:1–4, influence the active participation of church members in worship attendance at Pentecostal Church in Indonesia, especially at GPdI Haleluya Rungkut, Surabaya?

1.4 Significance of the Study

This research contributes to both theological scholarship and practical ministry. Theologically, it affirms the enduring relevance of biblical leadership models in contemporary ecclesial life. Practically, it provides empirical evidence to guide pastoral training and church policy. By quantifying the relationship between leadership and attendance, the study offers pastors, denominational leaders, and seminary educators a data-driven rationale for investing in character formation, servant leadership, and relational ministry practices. Furthermore, by focusing on a local Indonesian church, the study adds a valuable non-Western perspective to the global discourse on spiritual leadership.

In essence, this study aims to demonstrate that leadership consistent with 1 Peter 5:1–4 not only fulfills theological ideals but also produces tangible outcomes in congregational vitality and participation. The results are expected to affirm that spiritual authenticity and servant-oriented leadership are indispensable for sustaining engagement in the life of the church.

2. Literature Review

The purpose of this section is to situate the present study within relevant theological, theoretical, and empirical frameworks. The discussion begins with an exegetical analysis of 1 Peter 5:1–4, followed by a synthesis of modern leadership theories—particularly servant leadership and transformational leadership—that align with biblical principles. The section concludes with an overview of empirical studies linking pastoral leadership quality to congregational participation and attendance.

2.1 Biblical Foundations of Pastoral Leadership: An Exegesis of 1 Peter 5:1–4

The epistle of 1 Peter, written to Christians facing suffering and persecution, provides essential guidance for church leadership during times of trial. In 1 Peter 5:1–4, the apostle addresses the "elders among you," urging them to "shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock" (ESV). This passage encapsulates a theology of pastoral care grounded in humility, voluntary service, and moral integrity.

Exegetically, the term poimaino ("to shepherd") evokes imagery of nurturing, guiding, and protecting—functions central to pastoral ministry (Davids, 1990). Peter's exhortation parallels Jesus' instruction to Peter himself in John 21:15–17, where Christ commands, "Feed my sheep." The emphasis is relational rather than administrative; the pastor is a steward of God's people, not a ruler. According to Green (2007), this instruction outlines three contrasts that define spiritual leadership: willingness versus compulsion, eagerness versus greed, and example versus

domination. Such contrasts illustrate the tension between servant leadership and authoritarian control, highlighting the moral nature of Christian authority.

This biblical model resonates strongly with servant leadership theory, which characterizes leadership as self-sacrifice, empathy, and the empowerment of others (Spears, 2010). The apostle's instruction implies that effective leadership is not measured by institutional control but by the degree to which leaders embody Christlike service. Wright (2012) notes that Peter's theology of leadership flows from his Christology: as Christ "suffered for you, leaving you an example" (1 Pet. 2:21), so must leaders model sacrificial faithfulness. Thus, 1 Peter 5:1–4 establishes a paradigm for pastoral leadership rooted in moral credibility and relational authenticity—qualities that have profound implications for congregational engagement.

2.2 Servant Leadership and Pastoral Ministry

The concept of servant leadership, initially articulated by Greenleaf (1977), emphasises leading through service rather than authority. A servant leader prioritises the growth, well-being, and empowerment of their followers. In a church context, servant leadership aligns seamlessly with Jesus' teaching: "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant" (Matt. 20:26). Patterson (2003) identifies key attributes of servant leaders such as humility, love, vision, trust, and service—values that are congruent with biblical shepherding.

Empirical studies have validated the positive effects of servant leadership on organizational commitment and participation. Russell and Stone (2002) demonstrated that servant leadership fosters trust and cooperation, leading to higher employee engagement. Similarly, Sendjaya and Sarros (2002) found in their study of Christian leaders in Southeast Asia that servant leadership behaviors significantly predicted followers' sense of belonging and commitment to the ministry. These findings suggest that the biblical model described in 1 Peter 5:1–4 has observable outcomes in communal cohesion and participation.

In pastoral settings, servant leadership also reinforces the notion of spiritual authenticity—the consistency between a leader's character and calling (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2011). Congregants are more likely to engage actively in worship and ministry when they perceive their leaders as sincere and compassionate (Barna, 2017). Thus, servant leadership does not merely describe a moral ideal; it produces measurable behavioral effects, such as increased attendance and volunteer participation.

2.3 Transformational Leadership and Spiritual Influence

While servant leadership emphasises humility and service, transformational leadership theory focuses on inspiration, motivation, and a shared vision. Burns (1978) introduced the concept to describe leaders who elevate followers' values and motivations beyond self-interest. Bass (1990) later expanded the model to include four key components: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration. These dimensions are applicable not only in corporate settings but also in spiritual contexts (Parolini, Patterson, & Winston, 2009).

Transformational pastors are those who inspire congregants through vision, example, and genuine care. Fry (2003) proposed the concept of spiritual leadership theory, integrating transformational leadership with faith-based motivation. He argued that leaders who demonstrate hope, faith, and altruistic love foster a sense of calling and membership among

followers. In a similar vein, Reave (2005) reviewed 150 studies and concluded that spiritual leadership behaviours—namely, integrity, humility, and vision—consistently correlate with follower satisfaction and organisational success.

In the Indonesian context, research by Widjaja (2019) on Pentecostal pastors found that transformational leadership traits, especially inspirational motivation, significantly predicted congregational growth. Transformational leadership thus complements the biblical model by emphasizing influence through example, a central tenet of 1 Peter 5:3 ("being examples to the flock"). By integrating these frameworks, pastors can strike a balance between servant-hearted humility and visionary leadership, creating a holistic model that nurtures both spiritual depth and organizational vitality.

2.4 Congregational Attendance and Leadership Influence

Attendance remains one of the most tangible indicators of congregational vitality. While not the sole measure of spiritual health, regular participation in worship services reflects a congregation's sense of belonging, commitment, and trust in leadership (Chaves & Miller, 1999; Roozen, 2010). Numerous factors influence attendance patterns, including demographic variables, theological orientation, community involvement, and leadership quality (Stetzer & Dodson, 2007). However, among these factors, leadership stands out as a consistent predictor of engagement.

Hadaway (2011) found that congregations with high relational trust in pastoral leadership exhibited stronger attendance stability over time. Similarly, Damanik et al. (2022) demonstrated that the quality of pastoral care and communication directly impacted participation levels in Indonesian Protestant congregations. When congregants perceive their pastors as caring, approachable, and spiritually authentic, they are more likely to attend services consistently and participate in ministry programs (Wood, 2016).

From a theological standpoint, this relationship can be understood through the ecclesiological principle of koinonia—the fellowship of believers united in shared faith and mission (Snyder, 2004). Pastors who cultivate koinonia through relational leadership foster an environment of inclusion and mutual encouragement, which in turn reinforces attendance and engagement. Conversely, impersonal or authoritarian leadership styles can erode trust, resulting in disengagement or attrition (Choi, 2019). Therefore, understanding the dynamics of leadership perception and attendance is crucial for maintaining congregational vitality.

2.5 Gaps in the Literature

Despite the breadth of research on leadership and church growth, two significant gaps remain. First, most studies have been conducted in Western contexts, where ecclesial structures and cultural expectations differ markedly from those of Indonesian Pentecostalism. The Indonesian church operates within a communal culture characterized by high respect for authority and collective decision-making (Hoon, 2013). Hence, the interplay between pastoral influence and congregational participation may manifest differently. Second, few studies have quantitatively tested the relationship between biblical leadership constructs—specifically those derived from 1 Peter 5:1–4—and measurable congregational behaviors such as attendance.

This study addresses both gaps by empirically analyzing how congregants' perceptions of pastoral leadership quality influence their attendance patterns in a local Pentecostal church in Surabaya. By situating its analysis within both biblical theology and leadership science, the research provides a multidimensional contribution to the field of pastoral studies.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study integrates insights from 1 Peter 5:1–4, servant leadership theory, and transformational leadership theory. The framework posits that pastoral leadership quality—characterized by humility, example, and spiritual authenticity—positively influences congregational attendance through the mediating effects of trust, relational connection, and spiritual motivation. The model assumes that congregants' perceptions of pastoral credibility and care are primary determinants of their engagement in worship activities. This framework thus guides the study's hypotheses and the interpretation of its empirical findings.

Having established the theological and theoretical basis for understanding pastoral leadership and congregational participation, the following section outlines the research design, sample, instrumentation, and analytical methods employed to examine these relationships empirically within the context of GPdI Haleluya Rungkut, Surabaya.

3. Methodology

This section outlines the research design, population and sampling, instrumentation, data collection procedures, and analytical techniques used to examine the influence of pastoral leadership quality on congregational attendance at GPdI Haleluya Rungkut, Surabaya. The methodological framework reflects a quantitative approach designed to produce statistically valid and generalizable findings within the context of a local Pentecostal congregation.

3.1 Research Design

The study employed a quantitative correlational research design to investigate the relationship between two primary variables: perceived pastoral leadership quality (independent variable) and congregational attendance frequency (dependent variable). Quantitative methodology was chosen because it enables the systematic measurement of perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors across a defined population, thereby allowing for statistical analysis of associations and predictive effects (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

A survey method was used to collect data through a structured questionnaire distributed to congregants. This method was deemed appropriate for capturing large-scale responses efficiently while maintaining anonymity and consistency in data collection (Fink, 2017). The design aligns with previous studies on leadership and church participation that sought to quantify the relationships between leadership perceptions and behavioral outcomes (e.g., Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002; Widjaja, 2019).

3.2 Population and Sampling

The target population comprised adult members of Gereja Pantekosta di Indonesia (GPdI) Haleluya Rungkut, a medium-sized Pentecostal congregation located in Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia. The church has an estimated membership of approximately 300 active adults, distributed across various ministries and fellowship groups.

A sample of 155 respondents was selected using simple random sampling to ensure representativeness and minimize selection bias. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison

(2018), a sample size of over 100 respondents is adequate for correlational analysis in social science research, particularly when the population is moderately homogeneous. Participants were required to meet the following inclusion criteria: (1) active membership for at least one year, (2) age 17 years or older, and (3) regular attendance in at least one church service per month.

Demographically, respondents represented a diverse range of age groups, educational backgrounds, and levels of ministry involvement. The distribution included both male and female participants, reflecting the gender balance typical of Pentecostal congregations in urban Indonesia.

3.3 Research Instrument

Data were collected using a Likert-scale questionnaire consisting of two major sections: (1) Perception of Pastoral Leadership Quality, and (2) Congregational Attendance Behavior. The first section contained 20 items measuring dimensions of pastoral leadership derived from 1 Peter 5:1–4 and adapted from validated leadership instruments (Spears, 2010; Patterson, 2003; Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). The indicators included humility, willingness to serve, care and empathy, consistency of example, and integrity. Respondents rated each statement on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree").

The second section measured attendance frequency and participation intensity, including weekly worship attendance, involvement in small groups, and participation in ministry activities. Responses were recorded using a similar five-point scale, with higher scores indicating greater participation.

To ensure content validity, the instrument was reviewed by three experts in pastoral theology and church leadership from local theological institutions. A pilot test involving 20 respondents (excluded from the main sample) yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.91, indicating excellent internal consistency and reliability (George & Mallery, 2019).

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted over three weeks in May 2024. Prior to distribution, ethical approval was obtained from the local church leadership, and informed consent was secured from all participants. The survey was administered both in printed form after Sunday services and electronically through a secure Google Form link shared via official church communication channels. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality.

To minimize potential bias, instructions emphasized that the survey was for academic purposes and would not influence church administration or pastoral evaluation. The response rate was high (approximately 92%), resulting in 155 usable responses for analysis after data cleaning and verification.

3.5 Data Analysis Techniques

Data were processed using SPSS version 26 for Windows through a series of sequential analyses designed to examine the relationship between pastoral leadership and congregational attendance. Descriptive statistics were first computed to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics and to determine measures of central tendency (mean, median, and mode) for leadership perception and attendance scores. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was then employed to assess the strength and direction of the linear relationship between perceived pastoral leadership quality and attendance frequency, followed by a Simple Linear Regression analysis to test the predictive effect of leadership perception on attendance and to calculate the proportion of explained variance (R^2). Assumption tests, including the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test

for normality and scatterplot visual analysis for homoscedasticity, were conducted to confirm the validity of regression results. Statistical significance was established at $p < 0.05$, and correlation coefficients were interpreted based on Cohen's (1988) criteria: r = 0.10–0.29 (weak), r = 0.30–0.49 (moderate), and r = 0.50–1.00 (strong). To explore demographic variations, subgroup analyses compared mean scores and percentage differences across age groups and membership durations, revealing potential patterns of attendance behavior relative to perceptions of pastoral leadership.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical integrity was upheld throughout the study. Participants' consent was obtained through an informed consent statement explaining the study's purpose, voluntary nature, and confidentiality assurance. No identifying information was collected, and data were stored securely in password-protected digital files. The research adhered to the ethical standards outlined by the American Psychological Association (2020) for human participants in behavioral studies, as well as the ethical guidelines of theological research emphasizing respect, transparency, and accountability.

4. Results & Discussion

4.1 Overview of Data and Analytical Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of biblical pastoral leadership, as grounded in 1 Peter 5:1–4, on congregational attendance within the Pentecostal context of GPdI Haleluya Rungkut, Surabaya. Data were obtained from 155 active members using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire assessing (1) perceptions of pastoral leadership quality and (2) levels of worship attendance and participation. The quantitative analyses aimed to determine both the strength of association and the predictive power of perceived pastoral leadership on attendance behavior.

Descriptive statistics indicated that respondents generally held positive perceptions of their pastors' leadership. The overall mean score for pastoral leadership quality was 4.57 (SD = 0.38), suggesting that congregants "agree" to "strongly agree" that their pastors demonstrate humility, integrity, compassion, and consistency in example. The mean attendance score was 4.42 (SD = 0.41), reflecting high participation across regular services, small groups, and ministry activities.

To examine the relationship between these two variables, a Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was computed. Results revealed a very strong and statistically significant positive correlation between perceived pastoral leadership and congregational attendance ($r = 0.891$, $p < 0.0001$). This indicates that as congregants' perceptions of pastoral leadership quality increase, their level of attendance and engagement likewise increases substantially.

A simple linear regression analysis was then conducted to assess the predictive power of pastoral leadership perception on attendance. The regression model was statistically significant ($F(1,153) = 588.27$, $p < 0.0001$) and yielded a coefficient of determination of $R^2 = 0.794$, meaning that 79.4% of the variance in congregational attendance is explained by perceived pastoral leadership. The regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.891$) further confirms that leadership perception strongly predicts attendance frequency and involvement.

Subgroup analysis revealed interesting demographic variations. Members aged 41–50 years exhibited the highest average attendance scores, followed closely by those aged 31–40. In terms of membership duration, participants with 7–10 years of involvement showed the strongest engagement levels, suggesting that both maturity and long-term pastoral relationships contribute to greater participation. In contrast, members with less than two years of membership reported slightly lower attendance, potentially reflecting ongoing adjustment to the church culture and leadership style.

Overall, these results demonstrate a strong empirical linkage between biblical pastoral leadership and congregational participation, confirming the study's central hypothesis that leadership exercised in accordance with the principles of 1 Peter 5:1–4 significantly influences the vitality of church attendance and engagement.

4.2 Interpretation of Findings

The quantitative results affirm that the quality of pastoral leadership exerts a powerful influence on congregational attendance behavior. A correlation of r = 0.891 represents an exceptionally strong relationship, far exceeding the threshold for "strong" according to Cohen's (1988) criteria. This finding aligns with prior empirical evidence (Hadaway, 2011; Damanik et al. 2022; Widjaja, 2019) that leadership authenticity and relational trust predict consistent participation in worship activities. The high R^2 value (0.794) indicates that nearly four-fifths of the variation in attendance can be attributed to the way congregants perceive their pastors' leadership—an unusually high figure in behavioral research.

From a biblical perspective, this statistical evidence substantiates the theological principle articulated in 1 Peter 5:2–3, where elders are exhorted to "shepherd the flock of God among you… being examples to the flock." When pastoral leadership is modeled on service, humility, and example rather than authority and compulsion, it naturally fosters relational trust and voluntary participation. The strength of the correlation suggests that biblical leadership virtues—willingness, eagerness, and moral integrity—have tangible behavioral effects on the life of the congregation.

This finding reinforces the theological view that leadership in the church is not primarily managerial but pastoral and relational. The shepherd-leader metaphor used by Peter encapsulates the idea of leadership through presence, not position. Congregants who perceive their pastors as approachable, caring, and spiritually authentic respond with loyalty and active participation, confirming that spiritual authority is sustained by moral credibility.

The subgroup patterns—showing higher participation among those aged 41–50 and with 7–10 years of membership—also correspond with the relational maturity fostered by long-term pastoral care. Mature members often experience deeper identification with the church's vision and greater appreciation of pastoral authenticity. In contrast, newer or younger members may require more relational investment before the same level of trust and engagement develops.

4.3 Integration with Leadership Theories

The empirical results align closely with two interrelated theoretical frameworks: servant leadership and transformational leadership.

Servant Leadership

Robert Greenleaf's (1977, 2002) theory of servant leadership posits that genuine leaders prioritize the growth, welfare, and empowerment of followers. The servant leader leads by serving—demonstrating humility, empathy, and moral vision. Patterson (2003) and Sendjaya and Sarros (2002) have shown that servant leadership in Christian contexts promotes trust and collective commitment.

The findings of this study clearly mirror these principles. The congregation's strong attendance response to perceived pastoral humility and care demonstrates that service-oriented leadership translates into behavioral engagement. Pastors who exhibit servant-like attributes—willingness to listen, readiness to help, and consistency between word and deed—build spiritual credibility. This credibility then becomes the psychological foundation for members' commitment to regular worship.

Theologically, servant leadership is not merely a management model but a Christological imperative. Jesus declared, "The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve" (Matt. 20:28). Thus, when pastors imitate this model, they embody a leadership pattern rooted in divine example. The study's statistical evidence provides empirical validation for what Scripture has long taught—that service, not status, sustains community life.

Transformational Leadership

The data also resonate with transformational leadership theory (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1990). Transformational leaders elevate followers' motivation and morality, aligning them with higher collective goals. In church settings, transformational leadership manifests when pastors articulate a compelling vision, demonstrate moral integrity, and foster individual growth (Fry, 2003; Parolini, Patterson, & Winston, 2009).

The high correlation between perceived leadership and attendance suggests that visionary and inspirational leadership—hallmarks of transformational practice—enhances participation. Congregants do not merely attend because of obligation but because they are inspired by the leader's authenticity and sense of mission. Fry's (2003) concept of "spiritual leadership," which integrates faith, hope, and altruistic love, provides an apt description of the GPdI pastoral model: leaders inspire through moral example and shared spiritual purpose rather than directive authority.

This synthesis between servant and transformational paradigms reflects the dual nature of biblical leadership: humble service combined with moral vision. As 1 Peter 5:4 reminds us, the ultimate "Chief Shepherd" exemplifies both—the servant who leads and the leader who serves.

4.4 Theological Reflection: Leadership as Shepherding

The empirical results confirm that the biblical model of shepherding is not only a theological ideal but a sociological reality. When pastors embody the shepherd's role—feeding, guiding, and protecting the flock—they influence tangible congregational behaviors such as attendance and ministry involvement.

In 1 Peter 5:1–4, the apostle contrasts three pairs of attitudes that distinguish godly leadership: (1) willingness versus compulsion, (2) eagerness versus greed, and (3) example versus domination. Each of these contrasts has a direct behavioral correlate observable in this study's data. Pastors perceived as willing and eager shepherds foster voluntary attendance; those viewed as self-seeking or authoritarian discourage participation. The very high positive correlation found here ($r = 0.891$) can thus be interpreted as the behavioral expression of these biblical contrasts.

The shepherd model also speaks to the incarnational nature of leadership. Just as Christ led by living among His disciples, the pastor's relational presence within the congregation builds the

trust necessary for communal participation. This aligns with Nouwen's (1989) concept of "leadership from weakness," where vulnerability and empathy become sources of strength.

From a Pentecostal perspective, this relational shepherding takes on an additional spiritual dimension: the pastor's anointing and authenticity are perceived as channels of God's presence. When leadership is exercised under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it generates not only institutional stability but also spiritual vitality—expressed in consistent worship attendance, deeper discipleship, and communal enthusiasm.

4.5 Practical Implications

These findings carry significant implications for pastoral practice and leadership development within Pentecostal and wider Christian contexts. The strong predictive power of leadership quality on congregational attendance ($R^2 = 0.794$) underscores the urgent need for seminaries and denominational programs to emphasize character formation and relational competence alongside theological and administrative training. Pastoral effectiveness depends not only on doctrinal knowledge but also on the cultivation of empathy, active listening, and example-based mentorship. These relational and ethical capacities form the foundation of trust and credibility, enabling pastors to lead through influence rather than authority.

In many congregations, attendance strategies tend to prioritize programs and events designed to attract participation. However, the findings of this study indicate that relational authenticity exerts a far greater influence on sustained engagement. When pastors invest in genuine, trust-based relationships, they foster intrinsic motivation among members. In such an environment, attendance ceases to be a duty enforced by institutional expectation and becomes a joyful expression of belonging to a caring spiritual community.

The demographic analysis further reveals that midlife and long-term members respond most positively to biblical leadership models characterized by humility and example. This pattern suggests that relational maturity develops over time through consistent pastoral presence. Consequently, churches should adopt differentiated strategies for newer or younger members—such as mentorship programs, small-group integration, and intentional pastoral follow-up—to nurture similar depth of relationship and commitment as those enjoyed by more seasoned members.

Finally, because attendance behavior reflects congregants' perceptions of pastoral leadership, churches can use participation trends as diagnostic indicators of pastoral health and relational vitality. Success should not be measured merely by numerical growth, but by the quality of the relationships and the depth of trust between shepherds and their flock. Attendance, therefore, serves as a relational and spiritual metric—a mirror of the congregation's connection to its leaders and to the broader life of the church.

4.6 Comparison with Previous Research

This study contributes to a growing body of empirical evidence connecting pastoral leadership and congregational vitality. Hadaway (2011) found that relational trust in pastors stabilizes attendance patterns in American congregations, while Damanik et al. (2022) identified similar trends among Indonesian Protestant churches. Widjaja (2019) further demonstrated that transformational leadership predicts church growth among Pentecostal pastors.

The present findings extend this scholarship by confirming that biblical servant leadership principles—specifically those drawn from 1 Peter 5:1–4—have measurable behavioral outcomes. The integration of scriptural constructs into a quantitative framework provides a rare instance of theology-informed empirical research in pastoral studies. Moreover, by situating the analysis within an Indonesian Pentecostal congregation, this study offers a non-Western validation of theories developed primarily in Western contexts.

The strong empirical support also challenges the dichotomy between spiritual and organizational approaches to leadership. Far from being separate domains, this research shows that spiritual authenticity and organizational outcomes are mutually reinforcing: spiritually grounded leadership produces organizational vitality.

4.7 Theological Synthesis: Servant Leadership and Spiritual Vitality

The data invite reflection on a broader theological synthesis: that servant leadership is not only ethically commendable but also functionally effective in nurturing congregational vitality. The high level of attendance explained by leadership quality (79.4%) suggests that spiritual influence precedes structural growth.

From a pneumatological perspective, the correlation can be interpreted as evidence of the Spirit's mediating work through godly leadership. When pastors embody Christlike humility and integrity, the Holy Spirit uses their example to awaken desire for fellowship and worship within the congregation. Thus, the results do not merely confirm a sociological pattern; they reveal a spiritual dynamic at work in community life.

This dynamic echoes the early church's experience in Acts 2:42–47, where apostolic teaching and communal sharing resulted in numerical growth and steadfast participation. The same principle appears evident here: authentic leadership cultivates spiritual unity, which naturally manifests as consistent attendance and ministry involvement.

4.8 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

While the study's results are robust, several limitations should be noted. First, its focus on a single congregation limits generalizability; future research could apply the same instrument to multiple churches across regions or denominations to test the model's consistency. Second, although the study measured perceived leadership quality and attendance, it did not include mediating variables such as trust, satisfaction, or spiritual motivation, which might further explain the relationship. Third, self-reported attendance data may introduce bias due to social desirability effects, even though anonymity was ensured.

Future studies could expand on this foundation by employing structural equation modeling to examine indirect pathways between leadership, trust, and engagement, or by integrating qualitative interviews to explore how congregants articulate their experiences of pastoral care. Comparative studies between Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal contexts would also illuminate how theological traditions shape leadership dynamics and congregational response.

The merged results and discussion underscore that biblical pastoral leadership, when exercised in accordance with the servant and transformational principles reflected in 1 Peter 5:1–4, has a profound and measurable effect on congregational attendance and participation. Quantitatively, the data demonstrate an exceptionally strong positive correlation and predictive relationship between perceived leadership quality and attendance behavior. Qualitatively, these findings resonate with theological and theoretical frameworks that define leadership as relational, humble, and visionary.

Ultimately, the study reveals that leadership grounded in Christlike service not only fulfills biblical mandates but also strengthens the practical vitality of the church. When pastors lead as shepherds—willingly, eagerly, and by example—they reflect the heart of the Chief Shepherd and inspire God's people toward faithfulness in worship and community life.

5. Conclusion and Implications

This study aimed to analyze the influence of pastoral leadership quality, as grounded in 1 Peter 5:1–4, on congregational attendance at GPdI Haleluya Rungkut Surabaya. The findings provide clear empirical support for the firm and positive relationship between biblical pastoral leadership and active worship participation, thereby addressing all three research questions.

First, regarding congregants' perceptions of pastoral leadership, the data indicate that members of GPdI Haleluya Rungkut hold highly positive views of their pastors' leadership quality. Respondents consistently affirmed that the pastoral team demonstrates servant-hearted, humble, and exemplary leadership consistent with the biblical model in 1 Peter 5:1–4. These perceptions reflect a spiritually healthy relationship between leaders and members, built upon mutual trust and consistent pastoral example.

Second, in assessing the correlation between perceived leadership quality and attendance frequency, statistical analyses revealed a robust positive correlation ($r = 0.891$, $p < 0.0001$). The regression results further confirmed that 79.4% of the variance in congregational attendance can be explained by differences in perceived pastoral leadership quality. This demonstrates that effective, biblically grounded leadership directly motivates consistent attendance and participation in church life. The evidence underscores that when pastors lead with humility, authenticity, and commitment, they create a spiritual environment that encourages faithfulness and active engagement among congregants.

Third, the study also analyzed demographic factors—specifically age and membership duration—that might influence this relationship. The results show that members aged 41–50 years and those with 7–10 years of church membership reported the highest attendance and engagement levels. While formal moderation testing was not conducted, these patterns suggest that both age and tenure contribute to the strength of the relationship between leadership perception and attendance behavior. Mature and long-standing members may resonate more deeply with pastoral leadership values and demonstrate more substantial commitment to collective worship.

Taken together, these findings confirm that pastoral leadership rooted in biblical principles has a substantial, measurable impact on congregational vitality. The quality of leadership—expressed through care, humility, and example—serves as a catalyst for participation and unity within the church. Theologically, this affirms Peter's exhortation that shepherds must lead "not by compulsion but willingly… being examples to the flock" (1 Pet. 5:2–3, NKJV). Practically, it implies that churches should prioritize leadership formation programs that cultivate spiritual maturity, relational sensitivity, and consistency of character among pastors.

For GPdI Haleluya Rungkut and similar congregations, these insights carry significant implications. Investing in ongoing pastoral development—through mentoring, reflective practice, and theological renewal—can sustain both the spiritual health of leaders and the participatory vitality of members. Furthermore, understanding demographic nuances may help pastors tailor engagement strategies to different age groups and membership durations, ensuring that every segment of the congregation feels spiritually nurtured and motivated to participate.

In conclusion, the study demonstrates that the integration of biblical leadership values and empirical validation offers a robust framework for strengthening local church life. When pastors lead by example, as shepherds devoted to their flock, they not only reflect the heart of Christ but also foster a community characterized by faithfulness, unity, and consistent worship participation. Future research may explore additional moderating factors—such as gender, education, or ministry involvement—to broaden understanding of how biblical leadership dynamics shape church engagement across diverse contexts.

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