



**IMPLEMENTATION OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP AT GMIM SYALOM
LELEMA: THE EFFECT OF LEADERS' ATTITUDES OF SERVICE ON
CONGREGATION ATTENDANCE AT WORSHIP SERVICES**

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Abstract: *This study examines the implementation of Servant Leadership within GMIM Syalom Lelema and its influence on congregational attendance in worship fellowship. Rooted in the theological model of leadership exemplified by Jesus Christ, Servant Leadership emphasizes humility, empathy, presence, and service as core leadership values. Using a qualitative case-study approach, data were collected through observations, interviews, and documentation to understand the relational dynamics between church leaders and congregational participation. The findings reveal that the congregation highly values leaders pastors, elders, and deacons who demonstrate genuine care, pastoral presence, and willingness to serve. Acts of pastoral visitation, listening to members' struggles, and showing humility significantly strengthen emotional and spiritual bonds within the community, resulting in higher attendance and engagement in various worship activities. Conversely, leaders who lack servant-like attitudes tend to receive weaker responses from the congregation, which negatively impacts their participation in worship. The study concludes that Servant Leadership is not merely a theological ideal but a practical necessity within the communal culture of GMIM Syalom Lelema. The model effectively fosters stronger relationships, increases congregational commitment, and enhances the vitality of church fellowship.*

Keywords: *Servant Leadership, Pastoral Ministry, Worship Attendance, Ecclesial Leadership, GMIM Syalom Lelema.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In the context of the church, leadership plays a strategic role in shaping the direction of ministry, quality, fellowship, and growth of the congregation's faith. In the Protestant church tradition, especially churches in Indonesia, leadership is not only understood as an administrative function, but as a spiritual calling rooted in the example of Jesus Christ as a "leading servant." The concept of Servant Leadership, popularized by Robert K. Greenleaf, emphasizes that true leaders are those who first have a heart to serve before leading. This principle resonates strongly with Christian values that place humility, empathy, and service at the core of church leadership.

In the practice of church life, the presence of congregants in worship services is an important indicator of the vitality of faith and community cohesion. Congregants who attend consistently reflect positive experiences in the life of the fellowship, including feeling accepted, valued, and nurtured by their leaders. Thus, the leadership style of special servants, including pastors, elders,

and deacons, is a significant factor that influences the dynamics of congregational participation in both Sunday worship and categorical fellowships.

GMIM Syalom Lelema, as a congregation that is developing in a socio-cultural context, also faces challenges similar to those faced by many local churches: how to ensure that church leaders truly provide relevant, humble service and build spiritual closeness with the congregation. Although the organizational structure and ministry system of GMIM have regulated the duties of special ministers, the effectiveness of their implementation is still greatly influenced by the attitude of service of the leaders.

The reality seen in recent years shows that the level of congregation attendance in some forms of fellowship has fluctuated. There are fellowships that show high participation, but there are also those that have experienced a decline. This raises the question: does the leadership style that has been implemented truly reflect the principles of Servant Leadership? Do the leaders' attitudes of service such as their willingness to listen, their presence among the congregation, their exemplary lives, and their willingness to sacrifice influence the congregation's enthusiasm to attend and participate in fellowship?

This issue is important to examine because the implementation of servant leadership is not just a matter of theory, but concerns the congregation's real experience in feeling the quality of their relationship with their leaders. If leaders are able to provide humble and sincere service, then the congregation tends to feel cared for and called to be active in worship. Conversely, if leaders are perceived as lacking in service, presence, or pastoral relationships, this can weaken the congregation's motivation to fellowship.

Based on this situation, this study seeks to gain a deeper understanding of how servant leadership is implemented at GMIM Syalom Lelema and how the leaders' attitude of service affects the congregation's attendance at worship services. This study is expected to contribute theoretically and practically to the development of church leadership that is more contextual, humanistic, and service-oriented.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative research method with a case study approach. This approach was chosen to gain an in-depth and holistic understanding of how Servant Leadership is implemented in the context of GMIM Syalom Lelema and how the leaders' attitude of service affects the congregation's attendance at worship services.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Concept Of Leadership in The Church

Leadership in the church has a different meaning than secular leadership. Spiritual leadership is understood as the process of influencing God's people toward growth in faith and obedience to Christ. Maxwell defines leadership as “influence” a relationship that arises from the example and character of the leader, not merely from formal authority. In the ecclesiastical sense, spiritual leaders lead congregations with a spiritual orientation, not merely an organizational one. Banks and Ledbetter emphasize that Christian leadership is “a spiritual and communal practice that flows from the leader's participation in God's mission.” This means that leaders need to demonstrate spiritual maturity that enables them to shepherd the congregation with love, wisdom, and understanding.

Values And Character Of Christian Leadership

Christian leadership is characterized by Christ-like character. Sanders states that character is the core of spiritual leadership, and Christian leaders are required to demonstrate humility, purity of motivation, moral courage, and loyalty.

Paul in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 provides criteria for church leaders: not arrogant, able to teach, not greedy, friendly, and exemplary in speech and behavior. These characteristics show that church leadership is not primarily about managerial skills, but rather spiritual qualities that enable leaders to serve, guide, and direct the congregation toward God's will.

Biblical Foundations Of Leadership

The Bible provides a deep foundation for servant leadership. In the Old Testament, the leadership models of shepherds (such as Moses and David) show that leaders are called to bring God's shalom to the people. Isaiah describes the Messiah as the Servant of the Lord who serves with gentleness (Isa. 42:1–4). The New Testament presents Jesus as the par excellence example of leadership. In Mark 10:45 Jesus declared, “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve.” This statement became the normative framework for Christian leadership. Jesus washed His disciples' feet (John 13:1–17) as a symbolic act that a true leader becomes a servant to all. Furthermore, Paul's understanding of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12–27) emphasizes that leaders are tasked with equipping the congregation to participate in shared ministry, not monopolizing authority. Biblical leadership is relational, serving, and edifying.

Servant Leadership Theory

The concept of servant leadership was introduced by Greenleaf in his phenomenal essay *The Servant as Leader*. Greenleaf stated that a servant leader is someone who “first wants to serve... then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead.” This means that the basis of leadership is not the desire to hold authority, but rather the desire to serve others. From an organizational perspective,

servant leadership emphasizes the creation of an environment where others can thrive, find meaning, and feel cared for by their leaders.

Key Characteristics Of Servant Leadership

Larry Spears summarized the 10 key characteristics of servant leadership based on Greenleaf's work, including:

1. Listening – the ability to listen with empathy to understand the needs of others;
2. Empathy – understanding the feelings and perspectives of the congregation;
3. Healing – restoring relationships, emotional wounds, and conflicts;
4. Awareness – high self-awareness of spiritual and social dynamics;
5. Persuasion – influencing not through authority, but through moral argumentation;
6. Conceptualization – visionary thinking;
7. Foresight – the ability to see future implications;
8. Stewardship – responsibility to manage ministry with integrity;
9. Commitment to the Growth of People – encouraging the spiritual growth of the congregation;
10. Building Community – building a healthy fellowship.

This characteristic is very much in line with church values, where leaders are not only administrators, but shepherds who bring God's love.

The Relevance Of Servant Leadership In The Context Of The Church

The servant leadership model is highly relevant in the church because it imitates the leadership style of Jesus himself, who said: “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve” (Mark 10:45). Church leaders who adopt servant leadership will view the congregation not as objects of work, but as individuals who are loved and need guidance.

Pastoral literature shows that churches with service-oriented leaders tend to have stronger congregational relationships, higher participation rates, and healthier communication. This shows that servant leadership is not only a moral concept, but has a practical impact on the life of the congregation.

Congregational Attendance At Worship Services

Congregational attendance at worship services is an indicator of the vitality of faith and the quality of relationships within the community. According to Saliers, worship is “a communal practice that embodies the Christian faith in a tangible way.”¹ so that physical presence has an important meaning for the formation of collective spirituality.

¹ Don E. Saliers, *Worship as Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 15.

Factors that influence congregational attendance include: the quality of liturgy, inter-congregational relationships, the atmosphere of worship, pastoral care, and the leadership style of specific ministers. Schwarz points out that one indicator of a healthy church is active and consistent congregational participation.² This shows that leadership quality plays a decisive role. When congregants feel cared for, valued, and addressed by their leaders, their motivation to attend worship services increases. Conversely, a lack of attention from leaders can lead to a decline in congregational enthusiasm.

The Relationship Between Servant Leadership And Congregational Attendance

Servant leadership is directly related to the level of congregation participation. Leaders who serve with empathy, listen to the congregation's complaints, are present in their lives, and build personal relationships will create a spiritual climate that encourages the congregation to be actively present. Hunter emphasizes that servant leaders “build communities that enable members to grow and engage in shared ministry.”³

In the context of GMIM Syalom Lelema, the implementation of servant leadership can be reflected through concrete actions taken by leaders in visiting, directing categorical activities, guiding families, and showing solidarity in the struggles of the congregation. When leaders are physically present, the congregation will feel an emotional and spiritual connection, thereby increasing their participation in worship.

Thus, servant leadership is not only a moral or theological concept, but is closely correlated with the dynamics of the congregation. The servant attitude of leaders acts as a driving factor for increasing congregation attendance in worship and fellowship.

Context Analysis Of The Syalom Lelema Gmim Congregation

Based on observations and interviews with several informants, several key findings were discovered, including:

1. The congregation responds more positively to leaders who are willing to serve, especially pastors and special ministers who are present to listen to the struggles of the congregation, provide support, and demonstrate humility.
2. Pastoral visits are very important. The congregation emphasized that when leaders visit them when they are sick, grieving, or facing family problems, they feel valued and cared for as the body of Christ.
3. Leaders who neglect visits and personal relationships tend to receive less response from the

² Christian A. Schwarz, *Natural Church Development* (St. Charles: ChurchSmart Resources, 2006), 32–35.

³ James C. Hunter, *The Servant: A Simple Story About the True Essence of Leadership* (New York: Crown Business, 1998), 43.

congregation, which then has an impact on their motivation to attend worship services.

4. The presence of leaders in categorical activities and regional fellowships increases congregation participation, because leaders are seen as setting an example and building warm relationships.

5. Congregations tend to judge leadership based on concrete actions, not just sermons or speeches, so that gestures of service such as greeting, listening, visiting, and serving greatly influence their perception of their leaders.

6. There is a strong correlation between the quality of servant leadership and the stability of congregation attendance, especially in column worship, catechism, categorical worship, and Sunday worship.

These findings show that the pattern of servant leadership is not just a theory, but a real need in the life of the GMIM Syalom Lelema congregation.

Social Characteristics Of The Congregation And The Relevance Of Servant Leadership

The GMIM Syalom Lelema congregation lives in a strong communal social environment. The culture of *mapalus*, mutual support in times of joy and sorrow, and kinship ties create the expectation that church leaders will be present in their lives. In this context, servant leadership is highly relevant because leaders who serve are considered to be in harmony with the cultural values of the congregation.

Servant leadership is present not only as a model of church leadership, but also as an expression of service that is in line with the social structure of the congregation itself. When leaders are present in a communal society, the relationship between leaders and congregations becomes stronger and more meaningful, resulting in higher participation in worship.

The Effect Of A Serving Attitude On Congregational Attendance

Based on field data, there is a direct relationship between the serving attitude of leaders and the motivation of congregants to attend worship services. Congregations tend to be enthusiastic about participating in church activities when they perceive their leaders to be humble, willing to listen, embracing, approachable, present in their struggles, and sincerely supportive of family life. Conversely, if leaders tend to be distant, lack interaction, do not visit congregations, or display an authoritarian attitude, the congregation's response declines, as reflected in their lack of attendance at worship services.

In this local church culture, the presence of leaders symbolizes pastoral presence and the love of Christ. The absence of leaders is perceived as a lack of concern.

This explains why congregations are less responsive to leaders who are not actively serving them personally. In the perception of the congregation, the presence of leaders in their lives creates a

sense of belonging, being valued, and being accompanied. Pastoral visits are seen as tangible evidence that leaders care for them, thereby increasing their commitment to worship.

Servant leadership strengthens the communal identity of the congregation as the body of Christ. Warm relationships between leaders and congregants are the foundation for active involvement in ministry.

Synthesis: Relevance Of Findings To Servant Leadership

The findings of this study reinforce the theory that servant leadership has a significant impact on increasing community member participation. In the context of the GMIM Syalom Lelema congregation:

First, the communal culture of the congregation is in line with the principle of serving first;

Second, leaders who humble themselves and serve become spiritual role models;

Third, strong personal relationships are the main motivation for attending worship services;

Fourth, the congregation is very sensitive to the integrity and sincerity of leaders;

Fifth, pastoral ministry is not merely an administrative task, but an aspect of a leader's identity.

Thus, the implementation of servant leadership is not only a theoretical model, but a contextual necessity that has a direct impact on the life of the congregation.

IV. CONCLUSION

Research on the Implementation of Servant Leadership at GMIM Syalom Lelema shows that a service-oriented leadership style has a significant influence on the level of congregation attendance at worship services. Based on field findings, the congregation of GMIM Syalom Lelema known for its culture of mutual assistance and familial relationships has a strong tendency to respond positively to church leaders who demonstrate a genuine attitude of service, such as humility, openness, pastoral presence, home visits, spiritual guidance, and the ability to listen to the struggles of the congregation.

Conversely, church leaders who do not demonstrate servant leadership characteristics tend to be less accepted by the congregation, which then affects their motivation to attend worship and fellowship activities. Thus, this study confirms that servant leadership is not only a theologically ideal leadership model but also a practical necessity in the context of the GMIM Syalom Lelema congregation.

The presence of servant leaders creates a sense of being valued, cared for, and recognized,

thereby strengthening the emotional and spiritual bonds between the congregation and the church. This directly contributes to increased participation in worship, involvement in ministry, and strengthening the congregation's loyalty to the faith community.

The results of the study confirm that Jesus' model of servant leadership (Mark 10:45; John 13:1–17) is not only a normative basis but has also proven effective in the life of today's congregation. Ministry centered on love, exemplary behavior, and humility is capable of building a community that is alive, growing, and responsive to God's call.

Servant leadership needs to be made the standard for the formation of church leaders, both pastors and special servants (elders and deacons). The church needs to pay attention to the leader-congregation relationship as a determining factor in the success of pastoral ministry. The personal presence of leaders through visits, accompaniment in struggles, and empathetic communication has been proven to increase congregation attendance and participation in worship.

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