



The Perception of Tweens (Ages 8-12) On the Impact of Their Leadership Experiences in House Church Ministries on Their Self-Concept Development

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Abstract

This qualitative study is designed to explore how tweens' (age 8-12) leadership practice influences their self-concept development as a mechanism of social adjustment. The purpose of the current study is articulated in the following three research questions: (a) What is the influence on self-concept development? (b) What environment/relational factors impact self-concept? (c) What is the influence of systematic support on tweens' leadership experience in leadership over other children? There were a total of 30 children shepherds ($n = 30$; in-depth, face-to-face interviews), along with their 27 parents ($n = 27$; survey), five ministry staff ($n = 5$; unstructured interviews), and two volunteers ($n = 2$; unstructured interview) who participated in the research from five churches in Texas and California, which have adopted the House Church Ministry model and relevant children's ministry model. The collected data was analyzed with the assistance of the Nvivo 12 software program and produced the seven emerging themes implicating that a tween child can thrive in their self-concept related to social, prosocial, proactivity development through displaying their leadership over other children with social-emotional and programmatically practical support. As this support system assists individuals in their tween period to mature in their self-concept, it may result in a form of development that could translate into deeper engagement with their community.

Keywords: leadership, prosocial development, self-concept, social adjustment, tweens

1. Introduction

As the world went through a pandemic and various quarantines and shutdowns due to COVID-19, beyond the devastating fatal threats to human life, what other threats have we encountered? Socialization might be one of them. One can also speculate that young children's (age 0-8) socialization was threatened the most because of their underdeveloped social development. This eventually will harm their social development due to isolation from social interaction because of the years in quarantine. Now it is hard to predict the specific social developmental discrepancies of young children (age 0-8) and how they will be presented in the near future. However, as the young children who are part of the experience of the pandemic grow into tweens, there might be a time where the consequences of the unexpected social



deprivation take a toll on their development. For this reason, there is a need to be ready with a support system for these future tweens to compensate for possible shortcomings. Particularly, when we consider young children's social development, their self-concept is dealt with as the most essential component. The reason for this is that the concept of *self* stems from distinguishing themselves from others and adjusting themselves according to others. Self-concept depends heavily on the social environment and social-relational interaction. The following literature review will provide some implications for how to make up for the potentially damaged social development through the pandemic; specifically, for young children's future success in social adjustment through their leadership practice as they grow into the tween period.

1.1 1.1 Self-Concept Development

One's successful social adjustment is cultivated in previous one's developmental stages (Cassidy, 1999; Coie & Dodge, 1983; Nelson, 2010). Related to this concern, the current study explores what self-concept development is and how to increase tween's social adjustment mechanisms. Then, why tweens? The word *tweens* "is used simply to describe those kids who are 'in between' being little kids and being teenagers" (Siegel, et al., 2004, pp. 5-6). Tweens are perfectly capable of laying the necessary groundwork for their social adjustment emotionally, cognitively, and morally. It is a critical stage to develop their leadership characteristics and overall ethics according to Laurence Kohlberg, which will impact their self-concept development (Nelson, 2010, p. 20). According to Erikson's psychosocial stage development theory, Industry vs. Inferiority, they are socially and emotionally developing their attitude to contribute their resources to their community, want to hear its feedback, and be positively energized before they reach the self-consciousness that will eventually distress them in early adolescence (Franken, 1994; Siegel, et al., 2004). Moreover, this age period also is congruent with Piaget's Concrete Operational stage in which children develop logical thinking and a sense of command of their environment (Siegel, et al., 2004). The related theories for social-relational influence on individuals are Erikson's psychosocial developmental stage theory, Mead's social self and Kelly's personal construct theory, Rotter's social learning theory, and Vygotsky's social-culture learning. They collectively correspond to how young children develop their self-concept and how their environments are catalysts toward their self-concept development. As the well-known psycho-social theories indicate that although there are different approaches regarding either inborn capacity or social influence, we can conclude through studying the theories that the common thread shows that social influence contributes greatly to young children's social development related to their self-concept. It is also evident that a positive self-concept remains strong when children have social support and develop their inborn capacities. Furthermore, the related empirical studies for self-concept development imply that self-concept is related to children's future social success or school adjustment. Soomro and Clabour (2012) and Jackman and McPhee (2015) concluded that self-concept can be understood as a predictor of successful social adjustment as children grow into adolescence and adulthood. Regarding the importance of environmental/social support influencing positive self-concept development, many studies are conducted and conclude that there are three most influential sub-supporting groups: Parental support, Teachers'/others' support, and



programmatic support (Anyon, et al., 2016; Chan, 2002; Demaray, et al., 2009; Kikas & Mägi, 2016; Lynch & Sheldon, 2017; Oberle et al., 2014; Slotter & Gardner, 2014; Tatlow-Golden & Guerin, 2017). For self-concept development, Chan (2002), Demaray et al. (2009), Slotter and Gardner (2014), and Tatlow-Golden and Guerin (2017) concluded that self-concept development also must be viewed in the context of different personal perceptions and personal needs.

1.2.1.2. Leadership Development

Day (2004) defines leadership development as a process that includes everyone (leaders and followers) to grow together and be effective in its process (p. 840). Although there is no best theory, yet, which describes children's leadership and its influence on other development areas, in respect to children's development, it can be connected to social development. Rosenthal and Jacobsen (1968) first described the Pygmalion Effect, which implies in the context of leadership development that when children are recognized as leaders, the sense of their leadership can affect their self-efficacy (Nelson, 2010). Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner (1977) also clearly describes the social and social-relational influence on child/human development in ecosystems, such as micro, meso, exo, and macro-systems (p. 515). Additionally, the complexity of all bio-ecological systems that consider human biology, psychology, and behavior, interrelated with the ecosystem, produce the future development of children (Lerner, 2005). This can be related to children's leadership development by implying that as a child matures, the synthesized complex (temperament, biological skills, knowledge, experience, ability, and so forth) works as a central power that aligns with their activities, relations, and roles. Conversely, the Neo-Vyvotskian approach explains the importance of adults' roles in the process of the Zone of Proximal Development (Karpov, 2001) as providers for children's internalized tools meditating mental processes by conveying cultural meaning. Also, Bandura (1995) successfully elaborated on the self-efficacy evaluation theory. He implies that people develop a belief about their own "capability to produce valued outcomes and to prevent undesired ones, therefore, [providing] powerful incentives for the development and exercise of personal control" (p. 1). Furthermore, Csikszentmihalyi thoroughly unpacked Positive Psychology related to people's pursuit of authentic happiness which can be found while they are serving others.

Also, a total of 12 empirical studies were reviewed regarding children's leadership development and can be organized concurrently in the four following parts: (a) Increasing numbers of research proving the relationship between leadership and self-concept development as it is understood as a social adaptation mechanism (Hickman, 2006; Hollar, 2014; Li, Avery, & Song, 2011; Scharf & Mayseless, 2009; Teasely, Tyson, & House, 2007); (b) Increasing number of studies dealing with both environmental support and innate capacities (Atwater, Dionne, Avolio, Camobreco, & Lau, 1999; Avolio, 2005; Bass & Bass, 2008; Day, 2000; DeRue & Wellman, 2009, cited in Li, Avery, & Song, 2011, p. 111); (c) Increasing number of studies pointing out the importance of systematic practical support (Sun et al., 2017; Turgunbaeva, 2017) and social emotional support (Guerin et al., 2011; Rivizzigno et al., 2014; Hickman, 2006; Li et al., 2011; Scharf & Mayseless, 2009; Teasely et al., 2007); (d) Increasing number of studies for children's leadership focusing on cultivating their personality growth



(Guerin et al., 2011; Rivizzigno et al., 2014; Hickman, 2006; Li et al., 2011). Related to personality growth, prosocial-leadership development is considered the optimum for tweens' leadership development. There are a couple of the following points that can be recommended for cultivating children's prosocial leadership development (Hollar, 2014; Liebenberg & Roos, 2008; Sun et al., 2015; Turgunbaeva, 2017). The first suggestion is that well-developed programs need to (a) build up tweens' knowledge of leadership, (b) provide the chance for practicing their leadership skills, (c) internalize obtained knowledge and skills, and (d) generalize their learned leadership skills (Ladd & Mize, 1983, cited in Sun et al., 2017). The second suggestion is about providing systematic programs for children's leadership development focusing on personality growth. That is, the programs' goals, activities, feedback, and evaluation intentionally convey the emphasis of personality growth rather than any other typical leadership development goal such as tasks, performance, and accomplishment in their leadership practice. As a result, tweens can serve other people effectively with prosocial leadership that is strongly related to their positive self-concept development. (Guerin et al., 2011; Hickman, 2006; Li et al., 2011; Liebenberg & Roos, 2008; Rivizzigno et al., 2014; Scharf & Maysel, 2009; Teasely et al., 2007). The last suggestion is about to focus on the significance of meaningful interactions with adults and peers in the systematic programs which will work as scaffoldings for children's proximal development for their prosocial leadership as mentors, role models, and facilitators (Liebenberg & Roos, 2008; Middlebrooks & Haberkorn, 2009; Rivizzigno et al., 2014; Sun et al., 2017; Hickman, 2006; Liebenberg & Roos, 2008; Morin et al., 2015; Sun et al., 2017).

2. Methods

For this exploratory study, the Grounded theory was used as the qualitative research methodology. In terms of its goal, data collecting methods, and data analysis process, the Grounded theory worked perfectly for this research which strove to discover theory as it emerged from the collected data from the interviews and subsequent data analysis in the coding process (Creswell, Hanson, Clark, & Morales, 2007). The study was conducted in local churches in Texas and southern California that had a House Church Ministry (HCM) setting and relevant children's ministry model. The research sample consisted of children who had experienced leadership over other children in a small group setting regularly for more than a year as children shepherds in the local churches with HCM. The original plan was to recruit the sample only from Seoul Baptist Church (SBC) in Houston, Texas, which had initiated the House Church Ministry model and its children shepherd leadership model. However, in the pilot study, it was found that the children shepherds in local churches with the same ministry model were as equally qualified as the children in SBC. Therefore, a total of 31 children were recruited ($n = 31$; only 30 transcripts were developed): ten children were recruited in Houston, Texas ($n = 10$); 14 children were recruited in Austin, Texas ($n = 14$); and the rest of the children participants were recruited in Buena Park, Cypress, and Torrance, California ($n = 7$). There were 27 parent participants ($n = 27$), who filled out a short parent's survey, and seven ministry staff/program volunteers ($n = 7$), who participated in unstructured interviews.

SBC created their up-to-date children's leadership development model after experiencing difficulties with the HCM model since its inception in 1993. The leadership development



model was an unintentional result. It originated from the babysitting need of an adult's house church small group gathering every Friday. At first, the children came to the meeting with their parents and just watched TV or played video games without anyone's supervision. Once one adult took care of the children's small group. However, every time they gathered, one adult had to miss their own meeting. Thus, they needed one sitter who was not an adult participant but could take charge of the children's group. Through many trials and errors, they gradually systemized the children shepherding model over the decades including children shepherd's training, administrative support, mentoring system, informational sessions, and a children-shepherd conference. Each children's gathering while the parents are having their own small group meeting is led by a children shepherd in their own Friday house church meeting. A children's shepherd usually leads crafts, prayer, Bible story time, Bible story-related games, and recreation for about two hours. Children shepherds are 8 to 12 years old and lead three to 12 children members (ages 2 -12) in each Friday house church small group meeting. The current research followed the theoretical sampling process developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 47). According to the theory of this sampling process, which emphasizes data collection for generating theory, 31 children shepherds were selected because I realized that they could sufficiently augment their own knowledge and insights regarding their leadership experience as children shepherds (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 47). Face-to-face, in-depth interviews (ranges 15-45 minutes) were conducted with the 31 children shepherds to converse and make each one's experience a meaningful story by selecting all details of their fundamental experience while at the same time securing the clarity of the children's expressions (Schutz, 1967, p. 12; O'Reilly & Dogra, 2017). This interview process with the children followed the policies of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) adopted in 1989 by the United Nations.

Its article 12 and 13 endorse the rationale for including children in the current research: "Every child has the right to express their views, feelings, and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously" while their physical, psychological, and emotional safety are secured by the researcher (O'Reilly & Dogra, 2017, p. 4).

Regarding the view of children in the interview process, I took the position that children are the resource (Anderson, 2004, pp.100-101). This understanding inspired me to design the current study to hear children's voices sufficiently as a resourceful subject (Christensen, 2004, p. 169). The collected data were ensured to be confidential with pseudonyms and children were protected from all ethical issues and harm by minimizing influence from the power difference between the children and researcher as interviewees and interviewer. Also, during the interview, I strove to build up a rapport with the children by using their own vocabulary, interests, and culture; I tried hard to create a comfortable atmosphere for the children to freely express their emotion or distress, including flexible procedure and graceful ending while ensuring the quality of the data collection. Furthermore, the informed consent form for the parents or guardians was sent to help them make an initial decision for their child's interview participation and an assent form was sent to the children to confirm their agreements. For the data collection process, prior to the main interview, a pilot study was conducted with three children shepherds. According to the pilot study results, I amended some of the interview questions, and a total of 15 questions



were developed. In Table 1, the nine questions that became the key to successful data collection are presented. A total of 31 children were interviewed but only 30 interviews were transcribed word-for-word. Also, fieldwork notes were taken during the interviews and were used later for data triangulation along with parents' surveys. Data analysis followed the coding process such as the opening, axial, and selective coding to produce a theory to explicate the phenomenon of the influence of leadership on tweens' self-concept development with the assistance of the Nvivo 12 software program.

Table 1: Children Shepherd Interview Questions

| |
|---|
| 1) What is the coolest thing about being a children shepherd/leader? What is the hardest thing about being a children shepherd/leader? |
| 2) How do you feel about yourself as a children shepherd? How do you feel about yourself as a person? Can you choose an emoji to show your feelings about yourself? Why did you choose this emoji? |
| 3) What are three adjectives or words describing you as a children shepherd/leader? |
| 4) How did the adults in your house church respond to you after you became a children shepherd? |
| 5) Sometimes relationships with friends may change when a person becomes a leader over them. Have you noticed any changes in your friendships or relationships with the other children in your group because of your being in the children shepherd role? |
| 6) What do your parents think about your being in this children shepherd role? Have they said anything to you about this? Do they treat you any differently? |
| 7) What kind of talents and gifts do you think you have been given by God to serve as a children shepherd/leader? |
| 8) Can you briefly share who helps you have confidence about yourself as a children shepherd/leader? What gives you the most helpful and practical assistance to run the children house church program? |
| 9) If God sees that you have now involved your services in your house church/church ministry, what emoji can be representative of God's feeling about you? Why do you think the emoji might be God's feeling about you? |

3. Results and Discussion

A total of 30 children interviews, 27 parent short surveys, and a couple of ministry staff's, and volunteers' unstructured interviews along with field notes were collaborated and integrated for the data triangulation and generated seven emerging themes through the aforementioned coding process. The details of the study findings and further discussion are as follows:

3. 1. Results

To explore the impact of the tween's leadership practice on their self-concept development, each question corresponded well with at least one of the seven emerging themes. Shortly, the emerging theme 1.a to 1.d corresponded to the first question: (a) What is the influence on self-concept for tweens (age 8-12) serving in a leadership role over other children in a house church?; Theme 2.a. corresponded to the second question: (b) What environmental/relational factors impact tweens' self-concept as proximal supports within the context of leadership practice?; themes 2.b and 2.c corresponded to the third question: (c) What is the influence of well-



structured, systematic support on tweens' leadership experience in leadership over other children in a church ministry context? These study findings imply that children shepherds experience social, prosocial, and proactivity development, which becomes the inner foundation for their positive self-concept as a social adjusting mechanism through regular leadership practice. Also, leadership development requires environmental support such as emotional/relational support and systematic practical support. The brief report of the results is in the following section.

3.1.1 Demographics of the Participants

According to Table 2, the average of the children shepherds' ages was 10.11 years old ($SD = 1.19$), and the average grade level was fourth grade ($SD = 1.04$). They had an average of 4-5 children members in their groups ($SD = 2.23$) and an average of two years of shepherding experience ($SD = 1$). The standard deviation of the age was 1.19, of experience was 1, of the number of members was 2.23, of the grade was 1.04, and the number of references from the initiating nodes was 7.83.

3.1.2 Summary of Parents' Short Survey

On a scale of 1-5, parents marked the average of 4.1 regarding overall changes in their children's lives after being children shepherds. The parents reported that they could observe changes in their children's attitude toward their group members (Mean = 4.44), the level of patience in stressful situations (Mean = 4.30), in Sunday school participation (Mean = 4.26), in the level of happiness (Mean = 4.15), in school life (Mean = 4.12), in faith practice (Mean = 4.07), and in relationship with God (Mean = 4.04). Furthermore, questions 8 and 7 were open-ended questions, and a total of 18 out of 27 parents answered the two open-ended questions accordingly. For Question 8, the results show that their child became more responsible (13 parents), caring (10 parents), helping (10 parents), giving (7 parents), and patient (5 parents). For Question 7, parents reported that they were concerned about high expectations of other adult members in their house church small group for their children's ability (4 parents), their children's feeling of pressure as leaders (2 parents), a lack of responsibility (2 parents), a lack of patience (1 parent), and so forth.

3.1.3 Summary of Unstructured Interviews With the Children Ministry Directors and Volunteers of Supporting Ministry

I met ministry staff, volunteers, and directors of each church's supporting ministry. A total of seven unstructured interviews were conducted. Among the seven interviews, six of them were face-to-face interviews and one interview was on the Kakao Talk text. The summary is as follows: (a) Each church provides informational sessions either weekly or monthly; (b) Each church has a mentoring system paired with their Sunday school teachers or other adult church volunteers; (c) Each church provides a devotional package for children shepherds, Bible craft materials/other activities material for the Friday children's small group meeting; (d) Each church has a regular occasion to celebrate/acknowledge the children's leadership.



3.1.4 Summary of Children Shepherds Face-to-face Interviews

From the systematic data analysis process, seven main relevant themes emerged. The first four themes belong to the first category related to changes in children shepherds' self-concept. (a) Regarding the first theme, most children shepherd participants experienced and realized the positive changes in their self-view such as self-efficacy (100%), positive perception related to God's view (96%), and self-esteem (93%); (b) In regard to prosocial development as the second emerging theme, children experienced their character development (86%) and positive changes in their attitudes (83%) as well as perspectives toward other people (67%); (c) The third important theme is problem-solving skills related to proactivity development. Although 100% of the children (30) reported they have been struggling to handle small issues in their groups, 87% of the children (26) found their own creative ways to get members' attention and to finish the assigned activities successfully; (d) The fourth important theme indicates positive changes in their relationship with others: children members in their shepherding groups who are the same age as or older than them (80%) and God (50%) through their faith practices. Under the second category, environmental supports, there are three emerging themes: (e) Children were emotionally supported by other people's recognition (adult members, 67%; parents, 63%; children members, 63%); (f) Children got practical help from other people such as parents (47%), friends (15%), and mentors (13%); and (g) children received practical help from each church's supporting ministry: Monthly/weekly informational sessions (57%), monthly Bible study packages (33%), and mentoring system, (17%).

3.2 Discussion

Brief descriptions of the integration between the seven emerging themes and the literature review are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 *Emerging Themes and References Counts*

| Categories | Emerging themes | Subthemes | Number of children | References |
|---|------------------------------|---|--------------------|------------|
| Changes after being a children shepherd | 1.a Self-view | 1.a.i) Talents and gifts | 30 | 39 |
| | | 1.a.ii) Positive God's view | 29 | 34 |
| | | 1.a.iii) Self-feelings | 28 | 68 |
| | | 1.a.iv) Desire to be a leader in the future | 18 | 30 |
| | | 1.a.v) Self-conscious | 5 | 9 |
| | 1.b Prosociality development | 1.b.i) Self-describing words | 26 | 40 |
| | | 1.b.ii) Attitude | 25 | 49 |



| | | | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|---|---------|----|
| | | 1.b.iii) Perspective toward others | 20 | 53 |
| | | 1.b.iii) Behavior | 8 | 9 |
| | 1.c. Problem-solving | 1.c.i) Hard thing to be a children shepherd | 30 | 82 |
| | | 1.c.ii) Problem solving skills | 26 (19) | 80 |
| | 1.d Relationship with others | 1.d.i) Relationship with other children members | 24 | 38 |
| | | 1d.ii) Relationship with God/prayer | 15 | 29 |
| | | 1.d.iii) Relationship with siblings | 7 | 7 |
| Environmental supports | 2.a. Other people's recognition | 2.a.i) Adult members | 23 (20) | 57 |
| | | 2.a.ii) Parents | 19 | 43 |
| | | 2. a.iii) Children members | 19 | 26 |
| | 2.b. Help from people | | 29 | 79 |
| | 2.c. Help from a support system | | 26 | 74 |

3.2.1 Self-View (Table2. 1.a.)

Most children shepherds reported that there was a change in their view of themselves. The self-view was organized into three basic elements of self-concept: self-efficacy, self-perception, and self-esteem.

Self-Efficacy. Children shepherds (Table 2.a.i: 30 children; 39 references $n = 30$, 100%) reported that they develop their self-efficacy through realizing their talents and gifts used for effectively running their shepherding group. This report implies that children can see themselves as “more powerful” (Franken, 1994, p.443) when they serve their community (Bandura, 1993; Franken, 1994; Nelson, 2010). Dan described the adults' recognition of his contribution, which made him happy.

Dan (10 yrs.): They responded like “it’s good, good to have a children shepherd,” ‘cause usually when there was no MJ [children shepherd] we would just run around the house. So, they thought it was good to have a MJ because it would be more like controlled, and we needed one.



Also, children shepherds (Table 2.1.a.iv: 18 children, 30 references) described that they view themselves as future leaders for youth groups or adult groups. This self-view is directly related to self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993). Additionally, their self-efficacy development is related to a mutually beneficial relationship between the community and the individual according to social learning and social self-theory.

Self-Perception. Children shepherds (Table 2.1.a.ii: 29: children 34; references; 96%) reported, by drawing an emoticon, how positively they imagine that God views them because they serve other children as children shepherds. The research findings of Carson et al. (1999), Chan (2002), Jackman and MacPhee (2015), Soomro and Clabour (2012), and Tatlow-Godlden and Gruein (2017) indicate that early intervention in children's self-concept development enhances successful social adjustment. In regard to the related findings, children shepherds' leadership practice can be a great tool for enhancing their self-concept development as early intervention (Li, et al., 2011) in respect of positive self-perception development because they serve others.

Self-Esteem. Children shepherds (Table 2.1.a.iii: 28 children; 68 references; 93%) reported that they have positive feelings about themselves because they served others. They were asked to draw an emoticon representing their feelings about themselves. Most children (93%) drew a happy/positive emotion about their own feelings about themselves as children shepherds. This finding supports positive psychology's premise of true happiness originating from their service for others with their resources.

3.2.2 Prosocial Development (Table 2.1.b)

With regard to prosocial development, the findings imply that children shepherds experience prosocial development specifically in their character (Table 2.1.b.i: 26 children; 40 references; 86%), attitude (Table 2.1.b.ii: 25 children; 49 references; 83%), and perspective toward others (Table 2.1.b.iii: 20 children; 53 references; 67%). According to Hastings, et al. (2015), prosocial behavior is a result of prosocial development as it is defined as one's action choices to benefit others' well-being. This prosocial behavior is depicted well in Ephesians 4:11-13: All believers' service, contributing effort, time, gifts, and talents for others are contributed in order to build oneness and reach into the fullness of Christ in their faith community. The collective understanding of the empirical studies and theology support that children shepherds could develop their prosociality as well as their positive self-concept through their leadership practice in their shepherding groups (Feiring & Taska, 1996; Furman & Buhrmester, 1985; Levin, 1992).

3.2.3 Problem-solving Skills as Proactivity Development (Table 2. 1.c.)

With regard to proactivity development, the findings describe that children shepherds developed their proactivity because they served as children shepherds. All children shepherds (Table 2.1.c.i: 30 children; 82 references; 100%) reported that they had hard times because of their children members' interruptions, distractions, annoyance, fighting, arguments, and so forth while they were running the children's house church program. However, most of the children shepherds (Table 2.1.c.ii: 26 children; 80 references; 87%) also shared that they found certain ways to solve the problem by creating rules, reward systems, games, and activities,



along with compromising and negotiating with the members. Regarding their proactivity development, the study findings discuss that children shepherds might build up the resilience to buffer their self-esteem against negative experiences as a defense mechanism (Demaray et al., 2009) along with positive self-concept in stressful situations (Greenberg et al., 2003). According to Bandura's self-efficacy belief theory, the process of one's cognitive, motivational, and effective selection might collectively work as coping skills for children shepherds (Bandura, 1993).

3.2.4 Positive Relationships With Others (Table 2.1.d)

According to the children shepherds' report, they experienced changes in their relationships and interactions with other people. Specifically, this is related to their social development through interaction with the same age or older children in their small groups (Table 2.3.1.d.i: 24 children; 38 references; 80%). No one who had children the same age and/or older children in their group reported that they had difficulties in their relationships. Instead, they reported that their friendships developed more, and they even received their hands-on assistance during their meetings. Johan provided the exact reason in the following section.

So, so I don't really think it's about leadership, I think that it's about helping them. So, nothing changes between me and my friends 'cause me and him know I'm just helping him to do something, not like have leadership over him.

The helping leadership which was mentioned by Johan above possibly was influenced by their church's leadership training programs (Sun et al., 2009); it might be impacted by observing their adults'/parents' servant leadership (Bandura, 1995); they might also internalize helping leadership through their regular leadership practice in their small groups (Ladd & Mize, 1983).

3.2.5 People's Recognition (Table 2.2. a)

The relevant findings (Table 2.2.a.i: 23 children; 57; References; 76 %) imply that significant people's acknowledgment of their service as emotional support can escalate children's shepherds' self-esteem as well as self-efficacy. In respect to the adult members' recognition, a total of 20 children shepherds indicated that adult members' positive comments provided them more confidence with what they do in the small groups. Aileen shared the meaningful experience below:

Aileen: So every single time I tell the kids something, and they don't listen, and they get mad at me for telling them to stop doing something So like every single time they go out to their parents and they're like "Aileen said this and I don't want to do it," so their parents say "Oh, you should listen to Aileen. She's the children's shepherd," so they give me respect.

Furthermore, the current study findings discuss the important role of peer respect. The study findings of Hickman (2006) explain that children shepherds could raise their self-efficacy from the member's respect (Table 2.2.a.iii: 19 children; 26 references; 63%). Also, the current study



findings illustrated that a greater number of children find their social-emotional support in people other than their parents: adult members (23) and fellow children members (19), whereas fewer identified parental support (19) (Erikson, 1986; Schonert-Reichl & Lowler, 2014). In other words, community becomes powerful emotional support for tweens along with their families as they grow (Oberle, 2014, p. 297; Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Lerner, 2009).

3.2.6 Practical Help From People (Table 2.2.b)

Children shepherds (Table 2.2.b: 29 children; 79 references; 97%) reported that they had practical help to lead the program skillfully in their small groups from their parents or/and grandparents (14 children; 47%), their friends (5 children; 15%), mentors/Sunday school teachers (4 children; 13%), their pastors (2 children), God (2), and older or younger children members (2 children). The collective understanding of the relevant theories such as self-efficacy theory (Bandura), ecology theory (Brenfenbranner), Social Cognitive Learning Theory (Vygotsky), and child-adult joint theory (Neo-Vygotskian), empirical study findings of Anyon et al. (2016), Liebenberg and Roos (2008), Morin, Turesky, and Robinson (2015), Oerle, et al. (2014), and Slotter and Gardner (2014) collectively support that children shepherds might receive enough practical help from their parents, children members, adult members in their house church as well as volunteer/ministry staff in the church to develop their self-efficacy and positive self-concept.

Particularly, according to Vygotsky's social cognitive learning theory, this practical help from parents and others work as a scaffolding in children shepherds' proximal development of their leadership and self-concept development (Karpov, 2005) through verbal guides (Turesky & Robinson, 2015; Vygotsky; Neo-Vygotskians) and provided models of leadership (Bandura, 1993).

3.2.7 Practical Help From Systematic Support (Table 2.2.c)

The findings discuss skillfully that children shepherds (Table 2.2.c: 26 children; 74 references; 87%) received practical help from church supporting ministries such as mentoring systems, monthly/weekly children shepherd's informational sessions, and leadership conferences. The study findings of Hollars (2014) and Teasley, et al. (2007) imply that these systems support programs for children shepherds probably escalate children's leadership skills, which are related to their self-efficacy and self-esteem. The current study findings also clearly indicate that children shepherds receive spiritual, emotional, cognitive, and practical assistance from systematically organized ministry support. This holds up that children shepherd's leadership practice is supported by the significant role of systematic support as scaffoldings that guide children shepherds to experience their zone of proximal development as leaders (Vygotsky and Neo Vygotskians: the Zone of Proximal Development and child-adult joint theory).

4. Conclusion

It became clear that the opportunity for leadership practice over other children in a small group setting, such as a children's house church meeting, positively influences tweens' self-concept development along with their social, prosocial, and proactivity development. The reason for



this is that children can view themselves in a more powerful way while they are serving others with their own time, talents, gifts, and hearts. Furthermore, children are obtaining this helping leadership through their environmental support such as social-emotional/practical support from other people and programmatically practical support as that provides them a scaffolding which assists children shepherds to reach out to the zone of proximal development for their leadership to run the small group program effectively and affectively. Furthermore, this multifaceted support could guide children shepherds well to experience personality growth as leaders; the consistent small group gathering through years aids them to internalize helping leadership, which directly influences their positive self-concept along with prosocial development. In conclusion, there might be possible discrepancies in young children's social and prosocial development due to the years of disconnection from social interactions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, children can thrive in their self-concept as a social adjustment mechanism through a leadership opportunity in which they can serve others with their resources and with social and programmatic support as they grow into the tween period.

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