# Omega Graduate School

# Dissertation Research Prospectus

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# Problem Statement

The problem is a lack of understanding of the relationship between church leaders’ spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices.While there has been an abundance of research on Transformational Leadership (TL), further research needs to investigate the relationship between the spiritual formation of a leader and TL practices (Taladay & Panesar-Aguilar, 2021).Though some academic articles have touched upon the spiritual beliefs of leaders and impact upon their decision making, there is a clear evasion within the literature in addressing the role which religion and or a leader’s spiritual beliefs, have upon leadership (Gaitho, 2019).

# Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between church leader’s spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices.

# Background of the Problem

Leadership research ought to be considered equally important as medical research due to the potential leaders can improve the world and save lives (Spoelstra et al., 2021). Transformational leadership (TL) is one such leadership model which ought to be researched further particularly regarding the spiritual formation of transformational leaders. With this in mind leader’s spiritual formation regarding beliefs such as honesty, integrity, and truthfulness are essential to understand as these characteristics are valued highly by followers (Breevaart & Zacher, 2019). Leaders who exhibit healthy spirituality, do so by leading with virtues such as kindness, patience, and love (Taladay & Panesar-Aguilar, 2021). Those who follow transformational leaders consider the values and beliefs of their leader (Usman, 2020).

The Transformational Leadership model (TL) originated by Burns, was developed further by Bass who highlighted four main leadership categories which are idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1985). TL’s develop vision to clarify new directions for organizations while also encouraging employees to grow personally by thinking in new ways and accepting the challenge of beneficial change (Yue et al., 2019). The importance of relationships between TL’s and employees is essential as a foundational TL function is to inspire followers through building trust with them (Ewell, 2018). Followers begin to imitate their leader once trust and confidence is established and therefore relationships between TL’s and their followers become highly significant.

Spirituality as a dimension reflecting emotional characteristics such as love and trust are also found in the literature. Moore (2021) defines spirituality by incorporating multiple aspects of human life including the relationship with a higher power which leads to or influences change within an individual while also shaping their actions towards people and surroundings. What someone believes ultimately shapes their values which subsequently influences how they think about and view life in general (Paul Victor & Treschuk, 2020). Secular writers recognize the need for leaders to lead ethically, though they do not include faith formation in the ethical development of leaders (Krispin, 2020). Ethics and morally based values such as forgiveness and honesty are essential to the foundation of TL (Groves & LaRocca, 2011).

Beliefs are shaped significantly by religion and as a result, religious beliefs greatly influence a leader’s style (Gaitho, 2019) which can be recognized in various leadership theories. The influence of core beliefs through a leader can be seen clearly within the spiritual leadership theory which equivocates spiritual values with core beliefs, values, and the behaviors leaders exhibit toward followers (Jufrizen et al., 2019). Authentic leadership theory also emphasizes the centrality of a leader’s moral values to how they conduct themselves (Kozminski et al., 2022). Furthermore, the Servant and Spiritual Leadership models are shaped either directly from a theological context or in the case of TL while not as clear is evident (Spoelstra et al., 2021). Leman (2021) goes so far as to suggest that spiritual, transformational, and transactional leadership theories have been provably derived from the biblical narrative.

While there has been an abundance of research on TL, further research needs to investigate the relationship between a leader’s spiritual formation and TL practices (Taladay & Panesar-Aguilar, 2021). Groves & LaRocca (2011) affirm the literature is deficient in investigating the ethical values and moral foundation of TL. Though some academic articles have touched upon the spiritual beliefs of leaders and impact upon their decision making, there is a clear evasion within the literature in addressing the role which religion and or a leader’s spiritual beliefs, have upon leadership (Gaitho, 2019). Therefore, this research seeks to add to the knowledge of the literature through investigating the relationship between Church Leader’s spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices.

# Significance

This study will contribute to the gap in research on spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices by identifying the relationship between church leaders’ spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices. This will empower current church leaders to equip:

1. the next generation of church leaders to form biblical, Christ-centered spiritual beliefs

and,

2. the next generation of church leaders to develop transformational leadership

 practices.

# Research Question

RQ1: What relationship exists, if any, between self-assessed spiritual formation and self-assessed TL practices among church leaders in the General Assembly of Regular Baptist Churches (GARBC) in Southern New Jersey?

# Research Methodology

This study will utilize a quantitative methodology because hypotheses derived from research question will be tested using statistical analysis.

# Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

 The theoretical framework will be composed of two theories. Transformational Leadership and Spirituality theory will be combined to frame the research. Transformational leadership practices and spirituality continue to be topics of consideration regarding the formation of leader’s spiritual formation and practices (Taladay & Panesar-Aguilar, 2021).

# Instrumentation

This study will utilize two instruments to correlate transformational leadership practices and spiritual formation. The first is the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) produced by Kouzes and Pozner which measures transformational leadership practices. The five domains of the LPI are model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart (Kouzes & Pozner, 2021).

The second instrument to be used is the Spiritual Transformation Inventory (STI) by Dr. Hall which measures spiritual formation. The five domains of the STI are connecting to self and others, connecting to God, connecting to spiritual community, connecting to spiritual practices, and connecting to God’s Kingdom (Hall, 2015).

# Research Design

This quantitative study will utilize a correlational research design. The research will examine the relationship between spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices among church leaders from GARBC in Southern New Jersey.

# Population and Sampling

The target population for this study will be church leaders (Sr. Pastor, Pastors, Elders, Deacons, Bible teachers, and ministry team members) from 14 GARBC churches in Southern New Jersey. The population for this study will be 42 church leaders.

Convenience sampling will be utilized to ensure participants meet the inclusion/exclusion criteria until a sample size of 35 is attained. Permission to recruit participants will be secured from the GARBC.

# Hypotheses

H0: No statistically significant relationship exists between the self-assessed spiritual formation and self-assessed transformational leadership practices among GARBC church leaders in Southern New Jersey.

Ha: A statistically significant relationship exists between the self-assessed spiritual formation and self-assessed transformational leadership practices among GARBC church leaders in Southern New Jersey.

# Data Analysis Plan

This study will test data for normality and relevant assumptions of appropriate statistical procedures. If data do not meet assumptions for parametric procedures, nonparametric procedures will be utilized.

This study will utilize Pearson’s Product Moment of Correlation to test the hypotheses for statistically significant relationships. Descriptive statistics will be analyzed for central tendency, frequency, and standard deviation.

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