Chapter 1

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**CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

Good leadership is strongly connected with ethics and morality (Davidson & Hughes, 2020; Faddis, 2020). Transformational leaders inspire followers through personal moral and ethical beliefs and behavior (Trnka et al., 2020). As a result, followers’ moral and ethical values are enhanced, ultimately strengthening the organization (Usman, 2020). The spirituality of leaders and the transformation of their inner lives are essential to developing leaders’ morality, ultimately impacting their external behavior, which is the lived-out expression of ethics (Allen & Fry, 2022). Spiritual formation and strengthening leadership practices appear connected.

Though abundant research on transformational leadership is available, quantitative research investigating the relationship between leaders’ spiritual health and transformational leadership practices is lacking (Taladay & Panesar-Aguilar, 2021). Allen and Fry (2022) indicate the literature is deficient in addressing the relationship between the spiritual and a leader’s moral development. Researching church leaders’ spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices is needed to strengthen leaders, members of churches, and influence society morally and ethically.

Background of the Problem

Leadership research should be considered equally important as medical research due to the potential leaders can have to improve the world and save lives (Spoelstra et al., 2021). The original Transformational Leadership model (TL) by Burns and developed further by Bass, highlights four main leadership categories: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1985). TLs develop a vision to clarify new directions for organizations while encouraging employees to grow personally by thinking in new ways and accepting the challenge of beneficial change (Yue et al., 2019). Relationships between TLs and employees are essential as a foundational TL function is to inspire followers through building trust with them (Ewell, 2018). Followers begin to imitate their leader when trust and confidence are established, and therefore, relationships between TLs and their followers become highly significant.

Spirituality is found in the literature as a dimension reflecting emotional characteristics such as love and trust. Moore (2021) defines spirituality by incorporating multiple aspects of human life, including the relationship with a higher power. This relationship to a higher power influences change within an individual while shaping their actions towards people and surroundings. What someone believes ultimately shapes their values, subsequently influencing how they think about and generally view life (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 personal values, such as honesty, are essential to the foundation of TL (Groves & LaRocca, 2011).

Religion shapes beliefs significantly, and as a result, religious beliefs greatly influence a leader’s style (Gaitho, 2019), recognizable in various leadership theories. The influence of a leader’s core beliefs can be recognized within the spiritual leadership theory, equivocating 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 their conduct (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 still 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.

**Statement of the Problem**

The problem is a lack of understanding of the relationship between church leaders’ spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices. While abundant research exists on TL, further research needs to investigate the relationship between the spiritual formation of a leader and TL practices (Taladay & Panesar-Aguilar, 2021). Church leaders often work with volunteers, increasing the need for a high level of quality leadership for ministry to occur successfully (Butler & Senses-Ozyurt, 2020). A leader’s spiritual formation regarding beliefs such as honesty, integrity, and truthfulness is essential to emphasize, as followers highly value these characteristics (Breevaart & Zacher, 2019). Leaders who exhibit healthy spirituality do so by leading with virtues such as patience, joy, and love (Taladay & Panesar-Aguilar, 2021, p. 103). Those who follow transformational leaders consider the values and beliefs of their leader (Usman, 2020).

Groves & LaRocca (2011) affirm the literature is deficient in investigating TL's ethical values and moral foundation. Though some academic articles have touched upon the spiritual beliefs of leaders and their impact on their decision-making, there is a clear evasion within the literature in addressing the role religion and a leader’s spiritual beliefs have upon leadership (Gaitho, 2019). Therefore, this research seeks to add to the knowledge of the literature by investigating the potential relationship between Church Leader’s spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research study is to investigate the potential relationship between church leader’s spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices. A quantitative correlation testing approach will examine the relationship between church leaders’ spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices. Spiritual transformation will be assessed using the Spiritual Transformation Inventory 2.0 (STI) survey developed by Dr. Hall. Transformational Leadership behavior will be assessed using Kouzes and Posner’s Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) survey. Church leaders in Southern New Jersey representing a Protestant denomination named the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches (GARBC) will be surveyed to assess the relationship between spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices.

**Significance of the Study**

The significance of the study is it adds to the field of leadership development regarding the potential correlation between church leaders’ spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices. Spirituality and belief formation influence leaders’ thinking and views on life (Paul Victor & Treschuk, 2020). Numerous leadership models have morality and ethics as core concepts central to the role of leadership involving belief formation, spirituality, and theological influence for effective leadership practices (Gaitho, 2019; Jufrizen et al., 2019; Kozminski et al., 2022; Leman, 2021; Spoelstra et al., 2021). In spite of the centrality of ethics and morality to leadership, particularly the Transformational leadership model, secular writers have excluded faith formation in leaders’ ethical development (Groves & LaRocca, 2011; Krispin, 2020).

Identifying the potential relationship between church leaders’ spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices will empower current church leaders to develop a new generation of church leaders with biblical, Christ-centered beliefs. With biblically strengthened moral and ethical beliefs, these church leaders will be positioned to use transformational leadership practices effectively. The results will not only strengthen the church but also enhance the church's effectiveness to strengthen society by role-modeling and encouraging behavior essential for a healthy society.

**Research Question and Hypotheses**

The research question and hypotheses were developed from the purpose statement. The purpose of this study is to investigate the potential relationship between church leader’s spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices. Transformational leadership practices are strengthened by ethics, which are shaped by spiritual beliefs (Breevaart & Zacher, 2019; Usman, 2020). Quantitative research will be conducted to investigate if a relationship exists between the two measurable variables, transformational leadership practices and spiritual formation.The research question used to conduct the study is:

Research Question: What is the relationship between a church leader’s self-assessed spiritual formation and self-assessed transformational leadership practices?

# Hypotheses

H0:No statistically significant relationship exists between spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices among SBC & GARBC church leaders in South New Jersey.

Ha:A statistically significant relationship exists between the spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices among SBC & GARBC church leaders in South New Jersey.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework will be composed of two theories. Transformational leadership and spirituality theory will be merged to conduct the research. Transformational leadership practices and spirituality continue to be topics of consideration regarding a leader’s spiritual formation and practice (Taladay & Panesar-Aguilar, 2021). Cultivating a personal spirituality for TLs to lead ethically is an essential aspect of the transformational leadership model (Faddis, 2020; Mabey et al., 2017). Research indicates TL practices are closely associated with spirituality, which involves the ethical and moral development of a leader including their integrity and ethical judgment (Groves & LaRocca, 2011; Knoetze, 2022; Mabey et al., 2017; Yue et al., 2019). TL practices include building trust with followers, with studies showing the positive impact TLs have on followers' job satisfaction, psychological safety, organizational knowledge, and performance (Eki̇zler & Bolelli̇, 2020; Kılıç & Uludağ, 2021; Moin et al., 2021).

The transformational leadership model was originated by Burns (1978) and developed further by Bass (1985) having four themes: idealized influence (charisma), individualized consideration, inspirational motivating, and intellectual stimulation (Ekizler & Bolelli, 2020). The TL becomes a strong role model to followers, encourages followers to take ownership of their work, invests in followers developmentally, and stimulates followers to challenge tradition and creatively solve problems (Karaca, 2020). Through research, Kouzes and Posner established five practices of exemplary leadership which are 1) model the way, 2) inspire a shared vision, 3) challenge the process, 4) enable others to act, and 5) encourage the heart (Posner 2016). The Leadership Practices Inventory 2.0 (LPI) was developed to help individuals become more effective leaders (Posner, 2016).

Church leaders serve as transformational leaders seeking to role model the way, guiding fellow believers in the Church toward spiritual and ethical maturity, providing an inspirational vision, empowering believers to serve, and encouraging the heart of fellow believers (Posner, 2016; Zscheile, 2013). Church leaders develop spiritual maturity through an intimate relationship with God and, as a result, must constantly evaluate their motives and agendas to align spiritually with God’s will (Lockwood, 2020). Personal spirituality must be cultivated for leaders to lead with consistent moral beliefs and ethical practices, according to various leadership models, including transformational leadership (Crisp, 2018; Faddis, 2020; Mabey et al., 2017).

Spirituality theory involves the formation of beliefs, morals, and ethical behavior along with a connectedness to God or a Supreme Being, others, self, and surroundings (Otaye-Ebede et al., 2020; Paul Victor & Treschuk, 2020). Workplace spirituality and spiritual leadership reflect the foundational ideals of spirituality as each theory involves the ethical and moral development of the inner person (Adnan et al., 2020; Ball, 2021; Driscoll et al., 2019; Paul Victor & Treschuk, 2020). Spirituality is foundational for several leadership models, including transformational leadership (Mabey et al., 2017).

Hall and Edwards (1996; 2002) developed the Spiritual Assessment Inventory to measure relational spirituality. Developing the SAI further, the first version of the Spiritual Transformational Inventory was created leading to a second version, the Spiritual Transformation Inventory 2.0 (Hall, 2015). STI 2.0, developed by Hall, measures spiritual health from a relational spirituality perspective (Hall, 2015). STI 2.0 involves five domains which are: 1) Connecting to self and others, 2) Connecting to God, 3) Connecting to spiritual community, 4) Connecting to spiritual practices, and 5) Connecting to God’s Kingdom (Hall, 2015).

Spirituality theory and transformational leadership are closely related due to a shared emphasis on an individual’s internal formation of ethics and morals, resulting in the integrity of leader practices (Groves & LaRocca, 2011; Knoetze, 2022; Mabey et al., 2017; Majeed & Jamshed, 2023; Yue et al., 2019). Studies reveal TL practices involve respect for followers while inspiring, supporting, and challenging their intellect, resulting in an increase in satisfaction and job performance (Breevaart & Zacher, 2019; Ewell, 2018; Smith et al., 2018). Furthermore, honest and ethical communication by TLs minimizes misinformation, reducing followers' anxiety and stress (Yue et al., 2019). TLs significantly impact employees personally and their workplace culture (Majeed & Jamshed, 2023).

**Definition of Terms**

***Authentic leadership*** – Authentic leadership begins with a leader's internal virtues and moral character, resulting in the authentic development of followers, including positive psychological and ethical environmental factors (Ewah et al., 2020; GÜmÜsay, 2019; Hoch et al., 2018).***Biblical leadership*** *–* Biblical leadershipinvolves a biblical influenceonleaders, shaping their Christian ethics and ongoing daily practices, with the centrality of love impacting their service to others (Zigan et al., 2021). The Christian leader seeks to lead with the consistency of moral beliefs and ethical practices, integrity lived out before fellow believers and unbelievers alike (Crisp, 2018), and to guide fellow believers, the Church, toward a spiritual and ethical maturity (Zscheile, 2013).

***Christian spirituality*** – Christian spirituality is centered on a believer’s relationship with God, the Holy Spirit (Peng & Keller, 2019). The life lived in relationship to the Holy Spirit has not only cognitive factors but is a relationship overseeing every area of life, including the emotional (Meneely, 2015; Peng & Keller, 2019).

***Ethical leadership***–Ethical leadership, defined by Trevino in his ethical leadership theory, emphasizes the need for ethics within the individual leader and considers essential a leader’s moral characteristics, including integrity, fairness, and trustworthiness (Hoch et al., 2018; Zhu et al., 2019).

***Relational spirituality*** – Relational spirituality focuses on the centrality of a relationship with a higher being or ultimate truth as sacred and the resulting management of that relationship (Chapman et al., 2021; Hall, 2015).

***Servant leadership*** – Servant leadership, defined initially by Robert Greenleaf, emphasizes leadership from a serving follower perspective, with key attributes being consciousness, stewardship, persuasion, and the commitment to individuals’ growth (Ayogu et al., 2022).

***Spirituality*** – Spirituality includes a search for meaning and growth toward a mature self by transcending beyond the material and relating in some manner to a Higher Being (Kok & van den Heuvel, 2019; Paul Victor & Treschuk, 2020). Carson (1984) emphasizes that spirituality is more than simply the rationality of the mind or human response to experiences. Spirituality involves the formation of beliefs, morals, and ethical behavior through personal or life experiences (Otaye-Ebede et al., 2020).

***Spiritual formation*** – Spiritual formation, defined in an overall sense, involves a person's change in thinking, emotions, relationships, beliefs, or outlook on the world, thus changing the person and actions related toward other people (Rakhmonova G. Sh., 2021). From a Christian perspective, spiritual formation involves human transformation connected to a personal relationship with the God of the Bible and transcending the private relationship with God revealed into every area of human life (Neimandt, 2019).

***Spiritual leadership*** – Spiritual leadership focuses on the bringing together of humanity’s four existential aspects: body, mind, heart, and spirit (Scott & Tweed, 2016). Spiritual leaders emphasize ideals such as having a more significant life purpose beyond organizational goals, quality of work relationships, satisfaction in life and work, and personally experiencing full potential including joy, peace, and serenity (Ball, 2021; Lyons & Munro, 2022; Scott & Tweed, 2016).

***Transformational leadership*** – According to Bass (1985), TL involves four leadership categories: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. The Transformational leadership model was further defined by Kouzes & Posner to include five leader practices, which are: (a) model the way, (b) inspire a shared vision, (c) challenge the process, (d) enable others to act, and (e) encourage the heart (Sparks, 2021).

***Workplace spirituality*** – Workplace spirituality emphasizes the inner life of employees, encouraging a holistic approach to the deeper needs of individuals to go beyond their own needs and serve others (Adnan et al., 2020; Reddy, 2018).

**Assumptions**

Several assumptions are made in this study. First, the honesty of church leaders filling out the self-assessed instruments. Clear communication regarding the privacy of information will be given to each leader, ensuring the accuracy and integrity of the surveys completed. Secondly, defining authentic and ethical leadership in contrast to the normative usage of the terms is clarified in the definition section. Authenticity and ethical beliefs and behavior are normative descriptions of many leaders. As highlighted in the research, the Authentic leadership and Ethical leadership models have clear definitions. Lastly, attention has been given to defining spirituality correctly throughout the research. Spirituality, at times, can be assumed to be defined from a purely secular perspective or linked incorrectly with religion. Throughout the research, definitions are given to clarify the meaning of spirituality.

**Scope & Delimitations**

Research will be conducted to investigate if there is a relationship between church leaders’ spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices. Quantitative research using self-assessed surveys will be used to determine if a relationship exists. The study will be delimited to the South New Jersey area among Church leaders in the General Assembly of Regular Baptist Churches (GARBC). Delimiting the population and sample to leaders in the South Jersey GARBC Churches focuses the research specifically to ensure specificity (Miles, 2019). The population was selected because the researcher lives in the area and is familiar with the church denomination. The population is considered appropriate for investigating the research question.

**Limitations**

The research conducted is limited based on the study design and convenience sampling technique. Generalizability is limited due to the use of convenience sampling. A larger sample size could enhance the generalizability of the findings and the statistical significance of the study. Quantitative research using correlation statistical methods cannot determine cause and effect but rather determines if a relationship exists between the two variables (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2015). Mixed methods were not used for statistical analysis. The study design limited the use to one measurement for each variable.

Chapter Summary

Research is needed to evaluate the relationship between church leaders’ spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices to encourage next-generation leaders in the Church and society. Transformational leadership involves leaders’ development of morals and ethics (Groves & LaRocca, 2011; Vale, 2019). Developing leaders’ ethics and morals through a biblical theological context can transform the inner person and behaviors toward others (Greenway, 2022; Moore, 2021). The literature lacks quantitative research investigating transformational leaders’ moral and ethical belief formation (Groves & LaRocca, 2011; Taladay & Panesar-Aguilar, 2021). The quantitative correlation study will investigate the relationship between church leaders’ spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices.

The next chapter restates the problem and purpose statements while providing relevant information for the literature search strategy. The theoretical framework discussing the two research theories provides pertinent information to establish the research direction. A review of the current literature regarding spirituality, spiritual formation, transformational leadership, and connected leadership models provides the rationale behind the need for the research. A succinct summary finalizes the chapter.