**INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPIRITUAL FORMATION AND TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES: A QUANTITATIVE STUDY**

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# Abstract

Keep the abstract concise, typically no more than 250-350 words, adhering to your graduate school's specific requirements. Structure it to flow smoothly, covering the key components of your dissertation: purpose, methodology, results, and conclusions.

Start with a sentence or two summarizing the main objective of your dissertation. Clearly state the problem or question your dissertation addresses and its significance.

Briefly describe the research design and methods used. Mention whether your study is qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods, the data collection techniques, and the analysis approach, ensuring clarity for readers unfamiliar with your work.

Summarize the main findings of your dissertation. Highlight significant results, patterns, or trends from your data analysis. Be specific about what your research discovered, but avoid delving into excessive detail.

Conclude the abstract with the implications of your findings. Discuss the impact of your research on the field, society, and potential future research directions. If applicable, briefly mention the relevance of your findings to faith and religious contexts.

## Keywords

Include a list of keywords at the end of the abstract to help researchers find your dissertation in databases. Choose terms that capture the essence of your topic, methodology, and key themes.

# Acknowledgments

Personally acknowledge your chair, professors, mentors, and colleagues who assisted you in your dissertation journey at OGS.

# Dedication

You may optionally dedicate your dissertation to an individual or organization.

# Epigraph

You may optionally include a quote or statement applicable to your dissertation.

# Table of Contents

Use the Microsoft Word feature to automatically generate a table of contents based on styled level headings in your final, compiled dissertation.

**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 from Sandia Baptist Church (SBC) in Albuquerque, New Mexico 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 church leaders in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Ha:A statistically significant relationship exists between the spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices among SBC church leaders in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

**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 Albuquerque, New Mexico area among Church leaders serving in Sandia Baptist Church (SBC). Church leaders from five ministry roles will be invited to participate. These leadership roles are; Pastors, Deacons, Adult Connection ministry leaders, Children & Youth Connection ministry leaders, and Finance committee members. The Connection ministry is an age-based, small group ministry emphasizing Biblical teaching and relationships. Delimiting the population and sample to leaders in the SBC Church focuses the research ensuring specificity (Miles, 2019). The population was selected because the researcher lives in the area and is familiar with the church. 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.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

For leaders to lead ethically, central to good leadership, there is a need to cultivate a personal spirituality foundational to various leadership models, including the transformational leadership model (Faddis, 2020; Mabey et al., 2017). Definitions for spirituality are varied, though within the literature, characteristics of spirituality such as connecting to a higher being, people, and surroundings can be found (Paul Victor & Treschuk, 2020). Moore (2021) defines spirituality as incorporating multiple aspects of human life together while also including the relationship with a higher power leading to or influencing not only change within an individual but also shaping their actions towards people and surroundings. What someone believes ultimately forms their values, influencing how they think about and generally view life (Paul Victor & Treschuk, 2020).

The problem of the study is to investigate if there is a relationship between Church leader’s spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices. For Church leaders to lead transformationally, they must be in the process of spiritual formation and being transformed themselves (Lewis, 2019). For Christians, the message of God’s salvation through Christ Jesus is a message of transformative change not simply for others but for believers themselves (Niemandt & Niemandt, 2021). Without personal transformation, the TL will not be able to lead authentically or transformationally, in alignment with the primary organizational principle of leaders to be what they want to see others become (Sims & Lopes, 2011).

The purpose of this quantitative correlational research study is to investigate through self-assessed inventories if there is a relationship between church leaders’ spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices. Though the literature provides research on transformational leadership, it does not provide quantitative research investigating the relationship between leaders’ spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices (Taladay & Panesar-Aguilar, 2021). The literature search strategies, theoretical framework, literature review concerning spirituality theory, spiritual formation, interconnected theories of spirituality, transformational leadership theory, interconnected leadership models, transformational leadership practices, gap in the literature, and summary are covered.

**Literature Search Strategy**

The key purpose of research is to add to the overall knowledge of topics (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2015). Researchers need to develop new knowledge through careful analysis and research on current issues (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2015). The study conducted for this project involves utilizing relevant online search engines, including Google Scholar, ERIC, and Springer; ProQuest databases, including dissertations and journal articles; Google Books; Amazon Books; WorldCat; and Zlibrary and others. Peer-reviewed journal articles were accessed through SAGE journals; Emerald; MDPI; the Leadership Quarterly; Elsevier; Journal of Management; HTS Theological Studies; Journal of the Evangelical Society; Journal of Business Ethics; and others. Relevant databases searched via the internet are the Library of Congress; the New Jersey network of libraries; and others.

Ideas and relevant topics were researched to develop keywords, which are as follows: Spirituality Theory; Spiritual leadership; workplace spirituality; relational spirituality; Transformational Leadership Theory; servant leadership; ethical leadership; authentic leadership; ethics and morality; spiritual formation; and transformational learning.

Theoretical Framework

Spirituality theory and transformational leadership theory are the two theories framing the research. The derivation of the two theories, a summary of current literature, and relatability to the research topic will be reviewed. The discussion of the two theories and implications for the research contextualized to a Christian worldview are as follows.

**Spirituality Theory**

Spirituality theory is a sociological framework involving the relationship human beings have with the transcendent and the potential impact this relationship has upon society and organizations (Ewest, 2015; Ryff, 2021; Wood, 2010). Moore (2021) defines spirituality by incorporating multiple aspects of human life, including the relationship with a higher power which influences change within an individual while shaping actions towards people and surroundings. An individual’s search for meaning while pursuing growth and development toward a mature self are further dimensions of spirituality (Kok & van den Heuvel, 2019). What someone believes ultimately shapes their values, subsequently influencing how they think about and generally view life (Paul Victor & Treschuk, 2020; Muldoon & King, 1995).

Essential elements of spirituality affect beliefs, morals, and ethical behavior, each forming through personal life experiences (Otaye-Ebede et al., 2020). However, spirituality is more than simply the rationality of the mind or human response to experiences (Carson, 1984). The current understanding of human interactions has moved beyond the idea that human reason using scientific methodology is superior to spiritual ways of knowing (Cranton, 2016). Human nature is not simply cognitive but also physical, emotional, and spiritual (Piercy, 2013). A fuller understanding of human nature adds to a whole-person view of learning, as experiences are essential to human learning in these four arenas.

The moral development of an individual is a crucial element to be a transformational leader (Vale, 2019). Spirituality, which has not been a focal point of the leadership discussion (Makka, 2019), is aligned closely with ethical practices based on personally developed morals and values (Driscoll et al., 2019). Personally developed morals and values, which involve spiritual formation, are the basis of ethical behavior and are related to an individual’s relationship with God or the sacred (Porter et al., 2019).

Spirituality, the development of morals and values, can be influenced by a specific set of beliefs, sacred writing, ethics, or God, encompassing the overall idea of religion (Paul Victor & Treschuk, 2020). The idea that spirituality is automatically involved with or influenced by a specific religion is not supported. Spirituality reflects the human search for transcendence beyond the material and relating in some manner to a Higher Being (Paul Victor & Treschuk, 2020). Leaders who affirm a Higher Being and are accountable by following that Higher Being with a set of governing rules tend toward authenticity in their leadership practices (GÜmÜsay, 2019).

Religious beliefs are shaped through religious teachings and have a transcendent aspect irrespective of which religion is in view (Carson, 1984). Regardless of which religion is the ultimate, the transcendent factor of spirituality within the context of human nature is an important issue. Christianity, Islam, and Judaism regard spirituality as the worship of God and, therefore, move beyond definitions of spirituality, which tend toward including feelings or experiences as foundational to spirituality (Carson, 1984; Holder-Lonsdale, chapter 14, 2005). Spirituality involves the mind and emotional response to a power outside and higher than the self (Holder-Thurston, chapter 3, 2005). A response to a higher power and the resulting decisions of how to live in response to that higher power ultimately define spirituality.

*Spiritual Formation*

Definitions for spirituality and spiritual formation vary in the literature yet have similar characteristics, such as connection to a Higher Being, people, and surroundings (Paul Victor & Treschuk, 2020). The individual responding to and then seeking to live in response to a higher power, understood as spirituality, must begin a process of formation. Spiritual formation involves the whole person's intellectual, emotional, cultural, and spiritual dimensions being deepened in a spiritual journey (Knoetze, 2022). Spiritual formation is similar to the idea of transformative learning as both ideas focus on learning that changes an individual internally (Cranton, 2016).

An essential aspect of spiritual formation is the relationship between God and others (Knoetze, 2022). Society is involved in this relationship dynamic, as certain beliefs are formed through information from society (Orticio et al., 2021). One aspect of society involved directly in working toward the spiritual formation of its members is the Church or a theological institution, where congregational formation ought to be recognized as taking place in alignment with theological instruction (Knoetze, 2022). Without congregational change to exemplify doctrinal teaching, the instruction loses effectiveness. Christian spirituality views Jesus Christ as the higher power and lives life in response to Jesus and His Word, the Sacred text of the Bible, and the Spirit of Jesus (Carson, 1984).

*Christian Spirituality*

Early Christians understood Christianity to be a spiritual movement defined beyond simply being guided by one’s “inner spirit” to involve a believer’s relationship to God, the Holy Spirit (Peng & Keller, 2019). The life lived in relationship to the Holy Spirit has cognitive factors and a relationship overseeing every area of life, including the emotional (Meneely, 2015; Peng & Keller, 2019). Transformation is emphasized within the Christian faith and involves a believer experiencing a fuller life in God and missionaly engaged with God, all of which is accomplished through the power of God’s presence (Niemandt, 2019). Transformative change in the Christian faith is recognizable in the idea of repentance, which translated means a change of mind, thinking, or beliefs leading to a change of life (Louw & Nida, 1996). Repentance or transformed thinking anticipates a change in conduct (Zodhiates, 2000). In the Christian faith, the idea of repentance goes deeper than simply regretting and requesting forgiveness (Mabey et al., 2017). Repentance involves the soul's transformation, leading to a love for others, particularly outcasts of society.

In the transformation process, the believer continues to willingly learn the basics of the faith through Christian teaching and is further transformed personally and corporately within the Christian community (Meneely, 2015). Spirituality within the Christian faith does not occur apart from the Bible, or the idea of spirituality changes to an introspective, personally defined experience (Carson, 1984). However, cold adherence to orthodox creeds, without transformation of the soul, must be guarded against (Carson, 1984).

Transformation dealing with an inward change resulting in outward expression can be found in the New Testament (Hiebert, 1994). The apostle Paul in Romans 12:2 likens the metamorphosis of a believer to a worm forming into a butterfly. This type of change is not simply external but rather a profound inward change resulting in a new life accomplished by the Holy Spirit (Hiebert, 1994). Payette (2004) describes the Christian believer’s freedom from bondage as further transformation considered a work of the Holy Spirit. In traditional Christian doctrine, this process of change is known as sanctification, where a believer's change is aligned with the ideas of spiritual transformation or formation (Greenway, 2022).

The believer’s willing cooperation with the Holy Spirit is essential for spiritual transformation. A believer's spiritual formation stagnates without relational cooperation with the Holy Spirit (Payette, 2004; Reichard, 2013). The believer's disposition in choosing to experience the transforming power of the Holy Spirit involves learning more theologically about God’s character, which changes a believer's thinking, feelings, and actions regarding how life is to be lived (Meneely, 2015). Learning is, in essence, the basis of discipleship, which many congregations realize goes beyond simply acquiring knowledge to a change in identity (Wong et al., 2019). Learning is part of the transformational process, but learning merely to gain knowledge without redirecting or reforming life is not a spiritual transformation.

Though Christian spirituality involves learning and change empowered by the Holy Spirit's work, discipleship is like Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning, highlighting a self-directed learner's involvement in transformative learning (Cranton, 2016; Wong et al., 2019). The unique Christian expression of spirituality is based upon learning, involving God’s transformational power to change a person from what they have been into what He can make them to be (Wong et al., 2019). Payette (2004) emphasizes that believers must be willing to learn to experience the transformational power of the Holy Spirit.

Questions concerning the meaning of life and God give urgency to learning and provide purpose to learning itself (Meneely, 2015). However, within the Christian perspective of spirituality, faith and learning are intricately bonded, for without one another, there is neither (Luetz et al., 2018). The transforming work of the Spirit, ultimately by faith, is available for believers but not without the correct attitude and desire of the believer (Payette, 2004).

Secular writers recognize the need for leaders to lead ethically, though they do not include faith formation for leaders’ ethical development (Krispin, 2020). Prior to modernism, spiritual knowledge had been considered inferior to reason (Cranton, 2016). The term “spirituality” has been used within Protestantism due to a focus on Christian believers' spiritual lives, as emphasized in the Bible (Carson, 1984). To understand Christian spirituality, essential concepts of transformation and spirituality must be comprehended contextually as an individual’s alignment of life with God and resulting activity centered on the ways of Jesus as empowered by God’s indwelling Spirit (Niemandt, 2019). Christian spirituality involves ongoing, transformational learning focused on biblical doctrine, as well as the empowerment of the Spirit of God within every aspect of a believer’s existence (Meneely, 2015; Peng & Keller, 2019). Transformation leads to spiritual formation, which is the initial changed life of a believer by constantly adjusting life to the ways of Jesus to think, do, and, most importantly, become what God can change a person to be (Wong et al., 2019).

For Christians, the message of God’s salvation through Christ Jesus is a message of transformative change, with the understanding that transformation is not simply for others but for believers themselves (Niemandt & Niemandt, 2021). The Church is instrumental to spiritual formation taking place (Holder-Lonsdale, chapter 14, 2005). For church leaders to lead transformationally, they must be transformed themselves and be in the process of spiritual formation. Church leaders not only need to be spiritually transformed and forming, but they also must lead transformationally.

Interconnected Theories of Spirituality

***Workplace Spirituality***

Spirituality theory is recognizable within other theories, such as workplace spirituality, which promotes loyalty and heightens organizational morality (Balasundaram, 2020). Workplace spirituality highlights an employee’s inner and outer life and the importance of participating in meaningful work within a relational context (Adnan et al., 2020; Otaye-Ebede et al., 2020). The concept of workplace spirituality is still relatively new, yet it is showing promising results, such as increased loyalty and boosting morality (Balasundaram, 2020). The emphasis of workplace spirituality on the spirituality of the employee goes beyond simply defining the role one has within the workplace organization but, more importantly, emphasizes holistically the deeper needs of individuals to go beyond their own needs and serve others (Reddy, 2018). Spiritual leadership, similar to workplace spirituality, interconnects with the foundational ideals of spirituality as both theories focus in part on the ethical and moral development of the inner person (Adnan et al., 2020; Ball, 2021; Driscoll et al., 2019; Paul Victor & Treschuk, 2020).

***Spiritual Leadership***

Understanding spirituality within the context of leadership is an issue that has not been addressed sufficiently (Makka, 2019). Spiritual Leadership, developed by Fry, Fry, and Matherly, motivates followers by incorporating ideals such as faith, hope, and love (Balasundaram, 2020). As emphasized in spiritual leadership practice, spiritual well-being and ethical behavior improve followers' increased experience of peace and joy (Balasundaram, 2020). Leaders emphasize these spiritual values to establish followers’ core beliefs, ultimately impacting followers’ behavior (Jufrizen et al., 2019). Spiritual leaders must be on their own spiritual journey to effectively lead others (Lyons & Munro, 2022). The emphasis on a leader’s developing inner-life values such as faith, hope, and love, is essential for role-modeling to followers the importance of inner-life needs.

Immoral behavior, the antithesis of spiritual leadership's emphasis, indicates failing leadership due to self-focused behavior (van Saane, 2019). The indication is that moral leaders are succeeding, at least at some level. These moral leaders practice the moral standard found in most spiritual traditions: doing good by placing others first (van Saane, 2019). Positive results of putting people first and emphasizing spirituality include internal values such as joy and peace, and at the same time, externally through their behavior, experiencing more significant levels of productivity and reduced absenteeism (Balasundaram, 2020).

*Relational Spirituality*

Relationships are one of the most essential aspects of spiritual formation (Knoetze, 2022). Spirituality has been defined to be ways of relating to the Divine or sacred (Jankowski et al., 2019). 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). Increasingly, more scholars have begun to focus on the importance of the relationship between humanity and the divine, what has become known as “relational spirituality” (Hall, 2015). For some, this includes the relationship not only between a higher being and other humans but also with creation and animals (Chapman et al., 2021).

Due to the importance of relationships and the formational impact on human development, the underlying principle regarding relational spirituality is the development of humans within the context of emotionally significant relationships (Hall, 2015). The research framework regarding human development, including theories such as attachment and relational psychoanalysis, aligns with the idea that relational experiences impact the formation of the brain, thus impacting a person’s social relationships and personal emotions (Hall, 2015). The indication is that spirituality, the relationship with the Divine, is not simply a cognitive aspect of learning but includes a relational learning process (Counted & Zock, 2019). Formational relationships humans have with one another indicate the type of relationship involved with the sacred or higher being (Chapman et al., 2021; Hall et al., 2009). The inner dimensions of spirituality and psychology are not separated in understanding human development, providing a clearer relational understanding between a person and God and a person to others (Hall et al., 2009).

As research about relational spirituality increased, a broader measurement became necessary due to further developments, particularly in attachment theory and the importance of a person’s emotional experience with God (Hall, 2015). The Connected Life Model of spirituality is based upon relational spirituality theory. The Spiritual Transformational Inventory (STI) was developed further to measure spiritual formation (Hall, 2015). The STI 2.0 uses 33 scales with five main domains derived from the Connected life model of spirituality (Hall, 2015). The five domains 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).

**Relating Spirituality and Transformational Leadership**

Spirituality theory and transformational leadership both involve ethics, relationships, and formation. Faddis (2020) emphasizes the centrality of ethics to leadership. Serrat (2021) regards ethics as central to the discussion of leadership due to a leader's need to appropriately influence followers. For the transformational leader, integrity must be formed personally to develop ethically based relationships where persuasive vision and new direction for organizations can be successfully navigated (Mabey et al., 2017; Yue et al., 2019). Spirituality theory emphasizes the internal development of an individual, specifically regarding beliefs, which ultimately impact an individual’s thinking and view of life (Paul Victor & Treschuk, 2020; Muldoon & King, 1995).

The formation of beliefs and ethical behavior leading to coherently aligned practices is essential for Church leaders. For Church leaders to lead transformationally, they must be spiritually forming. When spiritual health within a leader is present, there will be meaningful relationships developed through integrity and transformational leadership practices. Spirituality involving leaders' internal ethical and moral formation is closely associated with foundational transformational leadership practices (Groves & LaRocca, 2011; Knoetze, 2022; Yue et al., 2019). Figure one illustrates the relationship between transformational leadership and spiritual formation leading to transformational leadership practices through the development of ethical beliefs and morals (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

*Research Theories connected with Beliefs leading to Transformational Leadership Practices*

A diagram of a company

Description automatically generated

*Note:* This figure demonstrates the theoretical framework of the study. Leadership theory, transformational leadership, spirituality theory, and spiritual formation are connected by ethical and moral beliefs leading to transformational leadership practices.

**Transformational Leadership Theory**

The Transformational Leadership model (TL) originated by Burns and was developed further by Bass, who highlighted 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 once trust and confidence are established, and therefore, relationships between TLs and their followers become highly significant.   
 The basis for strong relationships between TLs and their followers is the moral values and attitudes of the TL (Trnka et al., 2020; Usman, 2020). Groves & LaRocca (2011) connect the goals for change TLs seek to accomplish with the process for change, which TLs encourage using the values of honesty, loyalty, and fairness. Outcome values such as justice, equality, and human rights are also emphasized. These values promoted by TLs are based upon the essential development of morals within TL themselves (Vale, 2019). Ethics and morally based values, such as forgiveness, and personal values, such as honesty, are essential to the foundation of TL (Groves & LaRocca, 2011).   
 For TLs to lead ethically, they must develop integrity, including but not limited to factors such as altruism, fairness, and ethical judgment (Mabey et al., 2017). While developing personally, TLs must also role-model integrity and integrate various ethical elements to the followers under their authority. According to Laajalahti (2018), integrity is essential to be a moral leader, but it must be role-modeled and encouraged intentionally while followers are held accountable (Laajalahti, 2018).   
 The internal development of leaders is essential to the outcome practices of leadership. Kouzes and Posner (2021) give five domains transformational leaders should practice. These domains are 1) model the way, 2) inspire a shared vision, 3) challenge the process, 4) enable others to act, and 5) encourage the heart. Church leaders should be forming internally, spiritually, and developing leadership practices that transform followers, the Church, and ultimately society.

**Transformational Leadership Practices**

Change happens, and understanding how is central to understanding leadership (Green, 2016). Transformational leadership (TL) emphasizes particular leadership practices to exact change. This change is not primarily focused on short-term results but on an organization's long-term development and performance (Anthony & Hermans, 2020). Bass (1985), who further developed the TL model originated by Burns, defined four leadership categories: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. TLs look to generate long-term change through processes and results highlighting the importance of followers by communicating vision, emphasizing a broader perspective beyond self, clarifying purpose, the intellectual stimulation of employees, and developing relational trust (Bass, 1990; Ewell, 2018; Javed et al., 2020; Reza, 2019).

Kouzes and Posner furthered the work on the transformational leadership theory of Burns and Bass by developing the five practices of the exemplary leaders’ model (Posner, 2016; Taladay & Panesar-Aguilar, 2021; Watters, 2019). The Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) by Kouzes and Posner is used to measure transformational leadership practices (Posner, 2016; Watters, 2019). These five practices are 1) model the way, 2) inspire a shared vision, 3) challenge the process, 4) enable others to act, and 5) encourage the heart (Kouzes & Posner, 2021; Metz et al., 2019). The LPI has a Cronbach Alpha score of .88, establishing the scale’s strong reliability (Posner, 2016). Fields and Herold (1997) independently evaluated if transformational and transactional leadership practices can be measured using the LPI. Using LISREL 7 to evaluate second-order factor models produced strong results, establishing that the LPI can measure transformational and transactional leadership behaviors (Fields & Herold, 1997).

***Model the Way***

Transformational leaders model the way. Leaders must look inward and define their values and beliefs to effectively model the way for followers (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). To communicate with followers, leaders must express their views on leadership using their own words. Standards of excellence, including personal and organizational values, must be personally understood and communicated to followers (Odom et al., 2021; Posner, 2016). The leader’s behavior must align with personally held values and be authentically modeled to encourage followers to embrace and live out (Deeb, 2023; Odom et al., 2021). Through research investigating the effectiveness of student leadership at Yildiz Technical University in Turkey, the study revealed students can increase their leadership ability using Kouzes and Posner’s five leadership practices, with model the way being one of three practices reaching a statistically significant level (Konuk & Posner, 2021).

***Inspire a Shared Vision***

Transformational leaders inspire a shared vision. TLs are optimistic about the future, strengthening participation with others while encouraging them to move forward in a shared experience (Kouzes & Posner, 2012; Posner, 2016). TLs believe they can make a difference and communicate the future in attractive and inspirational terms (Odom et al., 2021; Posner, 2016). Deeb (2023) suggests TL’s are convinced of the future and share their conviction with followers while developing and communicating an attainable organizational vision. Sintayehu et al. (2021) researched employee commitment, and the results show that inspiring a shared vision positively affects staff commitment. Research conducted for accounting firms indicates inspiring a shared vision is associated with followers' organizational commitment and productivity (Mitchell et al., 2021).

***Challenge the Process***

Transformational leaders challenge the process. TLs help followers participate in necessary change to move beyond the status quo of organizations (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). To enable and empower necessary change, TLs are innovative and experimental in their practices (Posner, 2016). TLs encourage others by overcoming adversity and looking outward to improve methods (Odom et al., 2021). TLs view setbacks as learning experiences to improve and progress (Posner, 2016). Using small wins to encourage change and growth, TLs experiment with new methods outside organizationally established boundaries (Deeb, 2023). Cherian et al. (2020) researched the relationship between transformational leadership style and organizational performance, finding a high positive correlation does exist. The study indicates that transformational leadership practices, including followers' challenging processes, help improve organizational performance.

***Enable Others to Act***

Transformational Leaders enable others to act. Creating teams with strong family-like relationships, mutual trust, group participation, and freedom to make valuable decisions are ways in which TLs empower others to participate (Deeb, 2023; Kouzes & Posner, 2012; Posner, 2016). TLs seek to develop the competencies of others and involve team members in significant rather than menial ways (Deeb, 2023; Odom et al., 2021). Intellectual stimulation for leaders enhances creativity and innovation, as reported in a study of church leaders from Kenya (Demesi et al., 2022). The church leaders using transformational leadership practices encouraged congregants to resolve problems innovatively, significantly influencing church growth.

***Encourage the Heart of Followers***

Transformational leaders encourage the heart of followers. TLs value others and develop team community to accomplish team success (Posner, 2016). TLs recognize the need to encourage followers by publicly giving credit and showing appreciation for team members' contributions where deserved (Deeb, 2023; Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Verbal credit is vital to encourage team members, as are also rewards for valued team accomplishments, which keep alive team members' hope and determination (Deeb, 2023; Odom et al., 2021). The nursing profession is increasingly in need of training nursing leaders (Shaheen et al., 2021). In a study conducted by Shaheen et al. (2021), transformational leadership practices were given to staff nurses, with results indicating an increase in nurses' personal belief in their abilities, including making decisions and solving job problems. The encouragement to nurses through transformational leadership training led to increased self-esteem and empowerment.

***Importance of Relationships in Transformational Leadership***

The TL model has been characteristically compared with the transactional leadership model, with a key difference being the emphasis on relationships (Davidson & Hughes 2020). Relationships are central to transformational leadership as leaders seek to encourage and engage followers beyond self-interests into the greater vision and life of the organization (Crisp, 2018; Anthony & Hermans, 2020; Jensen et al., 2019). The relationship between leader and follower impacts the creative development and clear communication of vision and strategic direction (Bass, 1990; Usman, 2020).

***Development of Vision in Transformational Leadership***

Competencies needed in part by TLs involve the creativity to develop and the skill to communicate a vision to followers (Usman, 2020). TLs develop a vision and clarify direction while listening to followers' concerns and providing needed guidance and training for followers to succeed in a new direction (Reza, 2019; Yue et al., 2019). TLs inspire followers toward the organization's greater good while emotionally meeting their needs and challenging them intellectually (Bass, 1990). Both followers and TLs work together, sharing responsibility to accomplish the vision using defined tasks (Steinmann et al., 2018). As followers are persuaded to go beyond themselves for the greater good and coached toward a new organizational vision, their morals and values are enhanced (Usman, 2020).

***Development of Followers in Transformational Leadership***

The TL model establishes effectiveness through inspiring, supporting, and intellectually challenging followers, increasing followers’ job competencies and satisfaction (Ribeiro et al., 2018; Breevaart & Zacher, 2019). Bass and Avolio were proponents of the perspective that transformational leaders transformed organizations in part by developing a clear vision with direction and transforming followers to accomplish organizational change (Javed et al., 2020). The development of TLs within an organization will improve the overall performance of the organization (Usman, 2020). TL practice involves understanding followers’ motives higher needs, and engaging the person wholistically (Beaver, 2011). Through the relationship developed with followers, TLs provide an opportunity for followers to question leadership views constructively, creating an environment of trust leading to a greater environmental capacity to produce results (Mekka et al., 2020; Beaver, 2011; Ewell, 2018).

***Criticisms of Transformational Leadership***

Research underscores the validity and effectiveness of the transformational leadership model (Breevaart & Zacher, 2019; Deng et al., 2023; Groves & LaRocca, 2011; Hoch et al., 2018; Javed et al., 2020; Ribeiro et al., 2018; Usman, 2020). While TL and other ethically-based leadership models continue to be researched, research indicates weaknesses with specific aspects of TL. The charisma of a leader, an essential factor of TL, can be used to manipulate followers into not thinking for themselves (Alvesson & Einola, 2019; Chaplin-Cheyne, 2021). Alvesson & Einola (2019) go so far as to suggest the field of leadership study, including the TL model, is too focused on the fictitious idea of an ethically good, strong leader as the central subject. Due to the influence of mass popularity and positive psychology, Alvesson & Einola (2019) raise serious concerns about the reputable scholarship addressing the leadership arena. Confusion regarding charisma and the lack of well-defined, repetitious concepts found within ethical leadership models are all causes for concern (Alvesson & Einola, 2019).

Sam (2021) indicates a lack of research concerning the unethical side of leadership. The leadership models having ethics as an essential value, including transformational leadership, highlight good ethical leaders’ practices but do not clarify the difference between a weak unethical leader and an unethical leader (Sam, 2021). Leaders who do not practice integrity and use their authority and leadership role unethically, are something other than what a true leader should be in relation to their followers (Alvesson & Einola, 2019).

***Ethics and Transformational Leadership***

Ethics are instrumental to understanding leadership (Johnson, 2020). Narrowing the larger leadership picture to TL, moral development is needed for TLs to lead appropriately (Vale, 2019). The TL model stresses the importance of relationships, particularly followers’ identification with leaders’ moral values and attitudes (Trnka et al., 2020). The emphasis on leader ethics and morals is essential as followers of TLs perform well due in part to their level of trust (Breevaart & Zacher, 2019). Trust is a critical component mediating the leader-follower relationship, resulting in a provable impact on followers' attitudes, satisfaction, and performance (Mekka et al., 2020; Yue et al., 2019).

Trust is an essential focus within every organizational relationship (Mekka et al., 2020) and is enhanced when followers recognize their leader's integrity, beliefs, and competence (Khattak et al., 2020; Usman, 2020). The importance of moral and ethical formation within leaders is recognizable by the absence of leaders who developed internal ethics. The result of unethical TL practices can lead to the abuse of followers through manipulation and self-serving activities (Hoch et al., 2018; Kozminski et al., 2022). Personal values influence leadership’s ethical or non-ethical behavior due to the impact values have on how leaders view themselves and others (Watton et al., 2019). TLs embrace moral-based values such as responsibility and honesty more significantly when compared to the transactional leadership model (Groves & LaRocca, 2011).

**Interconnected Leadership Models**  
 In comparing the Transformational Leadership model to the Authentic, Ethical, Servant, and Spiritual leadership models, similarities include a shared value of moral perspective and, as such, are placed within the banner of positive leadership (Serrat, 2021). Further commonalities include leader self-regulation, organizational health, concern for individuals, and follower development. Ethics are instrumental in leadership models due to the purpose in which leaders are tasked to influence followers and do so with appropriate values and processes (Demont-Biaggi, 2019; Serrat, 2021). A leader’s conscience is shaped through the coming together of authenticity and ethics (Demont-Biaggi, 2019). Faddis (2020) suggests ethics is a core issue of good leadership. GÜmÜsay (2019) links humility, a trait developed partly by the influence of religion and a belief in God, to leadership.   
 While the authentic leadership model has a unique definition, taken within the idea of the overall positive leadership connection, the suggestion that true authentic leaders function with integrity and coincide their actions with their core values also applies to the various positive leadership models listed (Alkaabi, 2019). Examples are numerous. A moral and ethical link exists between the Authentic and Ethical leadership models due to an emphasis on integrity (Hoch et al., 2018). Empirical findings reveal a strong relationship between the Ethical and Transformational leadership models (Hoch et al., 2018). Crawford et al. (2020) suggest there is observable redundancy between the Authentic and Transformational leadership models. Avolio et al. (2004) recognize authenticity's strong bond within the Authentic, Transformational, and Ethical leadership models. The use of persuasion over force by leaders with character and ethics to influence followers is a common attribute in the positive leadership models (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). Ewah et al. (2020) suggest that authentic leadership is needed for all leaders as authenticity is an essential attribute of leaders regardless of the leadership model. Spiritual leadership and transformational leadership share, among other characteristics, the importance of respecting others (Ewell, 2018; Smith et al., 2018).Finally, many common elements exist between the Servant and Transformational Leadership models (Hoch et al., 2018). Numerous examples can be found to illustrate the relationships between the positive leadership models. The literature supports the idea that ethics, morality, and a leader’s beliefs relate to a leader's practice and, specifically, the practices of a transformational leader.

Religion shapes beliefs significantly, 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 leaders 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 Transformational Leadership, 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. Due to the commonalities binding the positive leadership models together, the Authentic, Servant, Ethical, and Spiritual Leadership models will be discussed.

***Authentic Leadership***

Authentic leadership (AL) can be understood to be a leadership methodology beginning with the internal virtues and moral character of a leader, resulting in the development of followers authentically, including both positive psychological and ethical environmental factors (Ewah et al., 2020; GÜmÜsay, 2019; Hoch et al., 2018). Various aspects of AL involve positive morality, relational transparency, and authentic behavior (Hoch et al., 2018). Transformational and Ethical Leadership is relatable to AL due to the similarity regarding a leader's authenticity and the resulting positive relationship leaders seek to develop with followers (Davidson & Hughes, 2020). Authentic leaders consistently behave with integrity, forming internal moral standards (Alkaabi, 2019; Kim et al., 2018). Furthermore, ALs are transparent about information and decisions with followers while also being willing to receive advice (Alkaabi, 2019).

The formation of internal moral standards by ALs takes place during difficult circumstances, giving an Al not only the understanding of what is authentic but also the strength of character to work through significant difficulties within both organizations and society (Crawford et al., 2020; Davidson & Hughes, 2020; Demont-Biaggi, 2019). Forming a moral consciousness is essential to understanding AL, as resisting the temptation to do wrong and doing right regardless of the circumstance or potential consequence is vital for the Al leader (Demont-Biaggi, 2019). Ultimately, many authentic leadership scholars hold a deontological view of authentic leadership practice, whereas Crawford et al. (2020) hold a virtue-ethic view. Regardless of the correct ethical view, ethics shaping an AL internally cannot be understated (Alkaabi, 2019; Crawford et al., 2020; Davidson & Hughes, 2020). The moral character and ethical formation of a leader, Authentic, Ethical, Transformational, or other, is of paramount importance for leader behavior to be aligned both internally and externally (Elrehail, 2018; GÜmÜsay, 2019; Hoch et al., 2018; Johnson, 2020; Zhu et al., 2019). Leaders who align external behavior with internal moral standards ultimately build follower trust and positively influence environmental and organizational trust, which is vital to the ultimate goals and methods of effective leadership (Crawford et al., 2020; Elrehail, 2018; Ewah et al., 2020).

***Servant Leadership***

Robert Greenleaf deserves credit for naming and developing Servant Leadership (SL), highlighting the primary role of leaders as servants (Hoch et al., 2018; Lyons & Munro, 2022). Greenleaf emphasized leadership from a serving follower perspective (Ayogu et al., 2022). A few key attributes of SL are consciousness, stewardship, persuasion, and commitment to individuals’ growth (Ayogu et al., 2022). These key attributes indicate several influential leader practices such as the stewardship of followers, placing the interests of others in front of self, showing humility, investing in followers wholistically, including their spiritual health, providing direction, and prioritizing social justice and equality above finances (GÜmÜsay, 2019; Lyons & Munro, 2022).

Ayogu et al. (2022) further emphasize ethics within the list of attributes for SL, highlighting the role of the leader as a servant while de-emphasizing the pursuit of greater power. For the leader, moral development is critical to the service behavior espoused through the SL model (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). Bass considered the SL model closely linked with transformational leadership due to similarities regarding vision, influence credibility, and the need for trust-based relationships (Hoch et al., 2018).

Implementing a servant leadership model is encouraged by leaders within the Church (Ayogu et al., 2022). Developing leaders in the Church by emphasizing the SL model's critical attributes can help develop the skills and competencies needed by church leaders (Du Plessis & Nkambule, 2020). For church leaders, the SL model is vital to role-model to leaders within society who can become better citizens through the practice of the various SL model attributes (Ayogu et al., 2022).

***Ethical Leadership***

Due to various scandals and leadership failures within various businesses and institutions, including Enron and the Church, Trevino explored ethics and leadership issues, ultimately developing the ethical leadership model (Brown & Trevino, 2006). Trevino’s ethical leadership theory emphasizes the need for ethics within the individual leader and the leader’s practices (Zhu et al., 2019). For the leader, personal moral characteristics, including integrity, fairness, and trustworthiness, are considered vital (Hoch et al., 2018; Zhu et al., 2019). Furthermore, for the ethical leaders’ practice, promoting ethics within the workplace is highlighted, focusing on characteristics such as objectivity, fairness, concern for others, and consistently practicing espoused ethical values (Hoch et al., 2018; Zhu et al., 2019).

The role-modeling of personally held ethical beliefs to followers by the moral manager or ethical leader is an essential practical emphasis of the ethical leadership model (Laajalahti, 2018; Zhu et al., 2019). An ethical leader exhibits to followers their personal development and a consistent practice of personal integrity, particularly when given a position of power (Mabey et al., 2017). To maintain personally held ethical beliefs and consistently practice these beliefs, cultivating a personal spirituality is vital, as spirituality is considered a foundational element for ethical, authentic, servant, and transformational leadership (Mabey et al., 2017).

***Spiritual Leadership***

Spirituality within the workplace has increased scholarly interest, leading to a further emphasis and development of spirituality in leadership (Lyons & Munro, 2022). The human spirit is the focus of spiritual leadership, derived partly from spirituality theory (Lyons & Munro, 2022). Spirituality involves connecting to others, surroundings, and God or a Higher Being (Paul Victor & Treschuk, 2020). Individuals’ personal beliefs impact their spiritual beliefs from a faith and religious perspective (Paul Victor & Treschuk, 2020).

Developed by Fry, Fry, and Matherly, spiritual leadership emphasizes a leader's focus on essential values such as vision, faith, hope, and love and is possibly the most empirically tested spiritual leadership theory (An et al., 2019; Balasundaram, 2020). Spiritual leadership attributes include having a greater life purpose beyond organizational goals, quality of work relationships, satisfaction in life and work, and experiencing full potential (Ball, 2021; Lyons & Munro, 2022). As good as improved worker performance may be, spiritual leadership seeks to go beyond profit and attain higher goals (Widodo & Suryosukmono, 2021). Leaders function as spiritual leaders when they have a perspective beyond the normal practices of daily work and respond to challenging or difficult circumstances as opportunities (Widodo & Suryosukmono, 2021). A leader’s personal spiritual journey and belief formation are essential to spiritual leadership because a leader’s genuine motivation and passion are needed to inspire followers (Lyons & Munro, 2022).

Fry’s spiritual leadership model emphasizes faith, vision, and altruistic love as elements, when actively engaged, can create a higher understanding of purpose in life, produce greater organizational loyalty with higher accomplishments, and result in a greater sense of life fulfillment (Balasundaram, 2020; Lyons & Munro, 2022). Spirituality at work highlights an inner life nourished through a greater understanding of relational participation within the community at work (Lyons & Munro, 2022). The spiritual leader is connected with positive ethical behaviors such as integrity, care for others, and justice (Ball, 2021). Spiritual leaders seek to encourage various practices at work, such as respect for others, fairness, and controlling one’s emotions (Smith et al., 2018). Spiritual leadership is recognized as an effective leadership model that improves followers’ commitment and employee performance (Ball, 2021). However, questions remain concerning the effectiveness of spirituality applied to leadership practices due to a lack of organizational performance and productivity (Lyons and Munro, 2022).

***Biblical Leadership***

The study of ethics is foundational to understanding leadership because ethics and leadership are closely related (Ciulla, 2017; Demont-Biaggi, 2019). Christian ethics and ongoing daily practices are partly shaped by the Bible, with the centrality of love impacting the service of others (Zigan et al., 2021). For Christians, the message of God’s salvation through Christ Jesus is a message of transformative change, with the understanding that this is not simply for others but for believers themselves (Niemandt & Niemandt, 2021). For church leaders to lead transformationally, they must be transformed themselves and be in the process of spiritual formation.

For the Christian leader, consistent moral beliefs and ethical practices lived out with integrity before fellow believers and unbelievers alike allow for transformational change to occur (Crisp, 2018). Christian leaders seek to guide fellow believers in the Church toward spiritual and ethical maturity (Zscheile, 2013). Transformational and spiritual leadership theories are derived from biblical values and principles (Leman, 2021). The essence of Christian transformational leadership is the inspiration of followers with a purpose toward a clear vision, even at the expense of one’s own identity, the very thing most Protestant pastors seek to do (Butler & Senses-Ozyurt, 2020). As a result, Church leaders and pastors need sound biblical theology training to be transformed personally and lead transformationally (Resane, 2020).

***Leadership Model Summary***

Authentic, Servant, Ethical, Spiritual, and Transformational Leadership models share the necessity of ethics and morality (Demont-Biaggi, 2019; Serrat, 2021). Christian ethics, focusing on the essential characteristic of love, are partly shaped by the Bible and impact the leaders' service to others (Zigan et al., 2021). The purpose of leadership is to influence followers using appropriate values and processes underscored by authentic ethics and morals (Demont-Biaggi, 2019; Hoch et al., 2018; Serrat, 2021). Faith and religion influence the formation of leaders’ beliefs and personal values, shaping their view of themselves and others, resulting in a genuine motivation and passion to inspire followers (Lyons & Munro, 2022; Paul Victor & Treschuk, 2020; Watton et al., 2019). The literature supports the idea that ethics, morality, and a leader’s beliefs relate to a leader's behavioral practice and, specifically, the behavioral practices of a transformational leader.

**Spiritual Formation and Transformational Leadership Studies**

Several leadership models, including transformational leadership, share the necessity of morals and ethics. The spiritual formation of leaders’ ethical and moral beliefs ultimately influences a leaders’ practices. Research conducted with Salesian Catholic school leaders in India sought to verify if spirituality influences transformational leadership performance, specifically spiritual determinants such as discernment (Anthony & Hermans, 2020). Findings strongly indicated the impact of the spiritual traits of self-directed-cooperativeness and discernment on transformational leadership practice.

Berkovich & Eyal (2021) researched the relationship between ethics and leadership styles within the context of graduate educational institutions in Israel. Convenience sampling was conducted resulting in a sample of 248 master’s degree students. A version of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) was used to evaluate transformational leadership behaviors, and the Ethical Perspectives Instrument (EPI) was used to measure participants’ ethical judgment. Several findings were reported, including the practical implication that an educational leader’s style is influenced by what form of moral reasoning the leader may have (Berkovich & Eyal, 2021).

To explore the use of transformational leadership practices by nurses within a university hospital in Bahia, Brazil, qualitative research was conducted with a sample of 25 nurses drawn randomly from a population of 237 nursing professionals (Ferreira et al., 2020). Findings indicated that nurses’ use of transformational leadership practices involving dialogue and leading by example was effective, and they were encouraged to do so with high moral responsibility.

**Identification of Gap in the Literature**

Leadership spirituality and the impacting results on leadership practices are ongoing discussions within the literature. Leaders' spirituality involving internal ethical and moral formation connects strongly to transformational leadership practices (Groves & LaRocca, 2011; Knoetze, 2022; Yue et al., 2019). Ethical beliefs are central to both spirituality and transformational leadership, impacting the spiritual formation of an individual and influencing their practices (Faddis, 2020; Muldoon & King, 1995; Paul Victor & Treschuk, 2020; Serrat, 2021). Though the literature provides research on transformational leadership, it does not provide quantitative research investigating the relationship between leaders’ spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices (Taladay & Panesar-Aguilar, 2021). Due to this gap in the literature, quantitative, correlational research methods will be used to investigate the relationship between a leader’s spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices.

**Chapter Conclusion**

The research of two main theories, spirituality and transformational leadership, reveals a need for further research to understand the relationship between a leader’s formation of beliefs and practice. The study underscores ethics as essential to good leadership (Demont-Biaggi, 2019; Faddis, 2020). Spirituality theory and interconnected theories such as workplace spirituality and spiritual leadership emphasize developing the inner person with intangible ethical and moral beliefs (Adnan et al., 2020; Hall et al., 2009; Lyons & Munro, 2022; Moore, 2021; Otaye-Ebede et al., 2020). The need to develop clarity regarding ethics and morality and how this development shapes actions is clearly expressed in the literature (Driscoll et al., 2019; Moore, 2021). Development or formation is needed within a person to have a positive direction regarding living life. Thus, spiritual formation and developing an ethical belief system are vital for successful leadership behavior and practice, particularly within the transformational leader (Allen & Fry, 2022; Vale, 2019).

Transformational leadership is a highly effective leadership model connected to the Authentic, Ethical, Servant, and Spiritual leadership models. These positive leadership models emphasize ethics and morality as essential elements of leading (Breevaart & Zacher, 2019; Groves & LaRocca, 2011; Serrat, 2021; Trnka, R. et al., 2020). These leadership models are closely related by emphasizing strong leader-follower relationships, ethics, morality, and trust development (Davidson & Hughes, 2020; Gigol, 2020; Hoch et al., 2018).

Though faith formation is not emphasized in secular literature, the development of the inner person through ethical and moral beliefs indicates faith formation (Krispin, 2020). Christian spirituality emphasizes the development of the inner person through ongoing transformational learning focused on biblical doctrine and the Holy Spirit's transformative role within every area of a believer’s life (Meneely, 2015; Peng & Keller, 2019). The continued transformation through the spiritual formation of a believer’s life is essential for church leaders to role model for their congregants (Knoetze, 2022; Wong et al., 2019).

The literature emphasizes a leader's formation of the inner person through ethics, morals, and beliefs, connecting spirituality and transformational leadership theories. Despite this emphasis, further research is needed to investigate the relationship and potential strength connecting leaders' spiritual formation and leadership practices (Allen & Fry, 2022; Taladay & Panesar-Aguilar, 2021). The quantitative correlational research of church leaders’ spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices seeks to add knowledge to this vital area of scholarship. The next chapter highlights the design and rationale for the proposed research in this field.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

Churches and society need courageous spiritual leaders with the skill and resolve to stand firm in their principles and beliefs amid an increasingly antagonistic culture (Metaxas, 2022). The literature does not provide quantitative research investigating if there is a relationship between leaders’ spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices (Taladay & Panesar-Aguilar, 20121). The purpose of this quantitative correlational research study is to investigate through self-assessed surveys the potential relationship between leaders’ spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices.A well-designed project is essential to ensure correct methods in accomplishing research objectives and the proper use of data analysis (McCombes, 2023). Chapter three provides details concerning the research design for this quantitative correlational study.

The purpose statement was shaped by recognizing a problem exists regarding a lack of understanding of the relationship between a church leader’s spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices. The resulting research question emerged, and hypotheses were developed in alignment with the research question to support the purpose of the study. The results of the study will answer the research hypotheses.

Research Question: Is there a statistically significant relationship between a church leader’s self-assessed spiritual formation and self-assessed TL practices among the church leaders of Sandia Baptist Church in Albuquerque, New Mexico?   
Ho: No statistically significant relationship exists between the self-assessed spiritual formation and self-assessed transformational leadership practices among Sandia Baptist Church leaders in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Ha: A statistically significant relationship exists between the self-assessed spiritual formation and self-assessed transformational leadership practices among Sandia Baptist Church leaders in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

The research methodology, including the purpose of the research and the research question, is defined and explained. The research design and rationale for the study are outlined, including the problem and purpose statements and the hypotheses. Essential information is outlined, including the appropriate quantitative correlational measures, the instrumentation to be used for the study, the population and sample, methods for data collection and analysis, the reliability and validity of the study, ethical procedures to be used, and a concluding summary.

Research Design and Rationale

This quantitative correlational study will examine the relationship between spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices among Albuquerque, New Mexico church leaders from Sandia Baptist Church. The Spiritual Practices Inventory will be used to measure spiritual health using an online secure survey (Hall, 2015). The Leadership Practices Inventory will be used to measure transformational leadership practices using an online secure survey (Kouzes & Posner, 2016). Data from the surveys will be documented in an Excel spreadsheet and exported to SPSS.

The Pearson’s *r* bivariate will be used to test whether a relationship exists between church leaders’ spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices. The Pearson’s *r* bivariate measures linear correlation between -1 and 1, signifying the relational strength and direction of the two variables (Turney, 2023b). Correlational research does not establish causality (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2015). The further from 0 the values are, the stronger the relationship exists between the two variables (University of Texas at Austin, n.d.).

Quantitative correlational methodology will be used to evaluate the data. Quantitative methods use statistics to numerically describe phenomena and determine if a relationship exists between two variables (Stockemer, 2019). Choosing a correlational research design is essential to appropriately evaluate the data based on the research question, which seeks to investigate if there is a relationship between the two continuous variables of church leaders’ spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices (Cherry, 2023). Qualitative methodology is used for general or open-ended research questions not in alignment with the research question of this study (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2015). A correlation method indicates the positive or negative strength and direction of a relationship between the two variables (Bhandari, 2021a).In comparison to a qualitative research design, more participants can be researched in a quantitative research study, providing a more significant number of observations to be made (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2015; Stockemer, 2019).

**Research Procedures**

Research procedures for the quantitative correlational research study will include explanations of the population and sample selection, instrumentation, data collection, and data preparation. The research will focus on church leaders serving Sandia Baptist Church in Albuquerque, New Mexico representing the Southern Baptist denomination. Two primary doctrines define foundational beliefs by Southern Baptist Churches: Salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and the authoritative Word of God (Southern Baptist Convention, 2023). Quantitative research is needed to investigate if a relationship exists between church leaders’ spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices (Taladay & Panesar-Aguilar, 2021).

Population & Sample Selection

The target population will be Church leaders from Sandia Baptist Church (SBC) located in Albuquerque, New Mexico.The Church leaders are active members of Sandia Baptist Church. Church leaders for the research conducted in this study will be defined to be Pastors, Deacons, Adult Connection ministry leaders, Youth & Children Connection ministry leaders, and Finance committee members. The leadership population for the five listed categories will be estimated to be 46 leaders.   
 The sample population is a minimum of 31 church leaders based on the calculation provided through G\* Power 3.1 (see Appendix A; Kent State University, 2019).A sample size must be large enough to gather sufficient data, and the statistical power must be established at a level necessary to derive accurate conclusions to avoid a Type II error, defined as accepting a false null hypothesis (Serdar et al., 2021). The standard percentage for statistical power is 0.8 (Serdar et al., 2021). The statistical power for this study is set at 0.9, ensuring strong accuracy and reproducibility of the testing and ensuring detection with reasonable certainty if there is a correlation between the two variables (Bhandari, 2023b; Terrell, 2021). The alpha is based upon a .05 significance error to protect against committing a Type I error, defined as the rejection of a true Null hypothesis (Serdar et al., 2021). A moderate effect size incorporated into the G\* Power sample size equation will be established at 0.5 to help indicate the meaningfulness of the relationship between the two study variables, spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices (Bhandari, 2023c).

Six leaders will be added to strengthen the sample size ratio to the population, bringing the sample size to 37 participants. There will be no less than 31 leaders, with the projected sample size target of 37 church leaders. By increasing the number of leaders, attrition will be guarded against and provide a robust sample size ratio of 80% of the estimated population of 46 church leaders. The Sandia Baptist Church leadership team will email potential participants a recruitment letter and consent form. Convenience sampling will ensure the availability of participants within the specific population to be researched (Stockemer, 2019).

The Sandia Baptist Church leadership team will provide permission to request voluntary participation in this research study of church leaders attending Sandia Baptist Church (see Appendix B). An initial recruitment letter (see Appendix C) and participant consent form (see Appendix D) requesting church leaders' participation in this research study will be emailed to the Sandia Baptist Church leadership team for disbursement to Sandia Baptist Church leaders. The Sandia Baptist Church leadership team will email the recruitment letter and consent form to potential participants who meet the requirements. The recruitment letter summarizes the purpose of the study and the requirements to participate. Church leaders include Pastors, Deacons, Adult Connection ministry leaders, Youth & Children Connection ministry leaders, and Finance committee members of Sandia Baptist Church.

The first 37 Church leaders returning a signed consent form will be chosen for the research. The participation consent form will include demographic questions to ensure the correct fit of each respondent. Participants will receive a hyperlink with a username and password via email with directions to access the online surveys. Research ethics will be followed to ensure participant rights are protected, improve research legitimacy, and protect research integrity (Bhandari, 2021b).

Instrumentation

The quantitative correlational study will explore the potential relationship between church leaders’ spiritual health, measured by the STI 2.0, and transformational leadership practices, measured by the LPI. Online surveys will be used to evaluate church leaders' spirituality, transformational leadership practices, and quantitative statistics will be utilized to test the relationship between the two. Two self-assessed instruments will be emailed to participants to investigate if a relationship exists between transformational leadership practices and spiritual formation. The first instrument is the Leadership Practices Inventory, with 30 scales (Kouzes & Posner, 2016). Kouzes and Posner (2021) give five domains transformational leaders should practice. These domains are 1) model the way, 2) inspire a shared vision, 3) challenge the process, 4) enable others to act, and 5) encourage the heart (see Appendix E for the permission letter). The second instrument is the Spiritual Transformation Inventory 2.0 (Hall, 2015). The STI 2.0 uses 33 scales with five main domains derived from the Connected life model of spirituality (Hall, 2015). The five domains 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 (Kouzes & Posner, 2021; Metz et al., 2019; Posner, 2016; Watters, 2019; see Appendix F for the permission letter).

Each instrument aligns with the research question because the LPI measures transformational leadership practices, and the STI 2.0 measures spiritual health. The LPI was developed by Kouzes and Posner based on their transformational leadership model to help individuals become more effective leaders (Posner, 2016). The STI 2.0, developed by Dr. Hall, assesses the spiritual development of individuals through using the relational model of spiritual development called The Connected Life (Hall, 2015). Both instruments use ordinal Likert-scale items with more than five potential answers for each question, significantly increasing accuracy (Rahi, 2017). Quantitative research can be conducted with these two instruments because they use more than five Likert scale responses, allowing ordinal variables to be treated as interval data (Alabi & Jelili, 2023).

***Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI)*** Transformational Leadership practices will be measured by the LPI (see Appendix E for permission letter), a survey developed by Kouzes and Posner to measure transformational leadership practices recognized in the Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership(Posner, 2016; Watters, 2019). Kouzes and Posner, through their research, show leaders are not simply born with certain innate qualities, nor is leadership success for only a certain select number (Watters, 2019). The five practices of exemplary leadership were derived through extensive research, interviews, and iterative processes, shaping the LPI into one of today’s most utilized leadership surveys with nearly 2.8 million online responses (Posner, 2016; Watters, 2019).

The LPI began with a 5-point Likert scale and developed through research into a ten-question Likert scale to score responses ranging from 1- almost never, to 10 - almost always (Posner, 2016).Cronbach’s alpha, used to measure a set of scales’ internal strength and reliability with an acceptable reliability coefficient of .7, was used to measure the internal validity of the LPI (Goforth, 2015; UCLA, 2021). Internal reliability establishes the instrument's consistency, ensuring a high level of accuracy and repeatable results (Posner, 2016). The strong reliability of the LPI has been established by the use of the LPI in numerous disciplines, ethnicities, and education levels (Posner, 2016). The Cronbach Alpha score for the LPI scale is .88, establishing the strong reliability of the scale (Posner, 2016). The request to use the LPI was applied for, and permission was received immediately upon payment of the research fee (see Appendix E for the permission letter).

***Spiritual Transformational Inventory (STI)***

Spiritual Formation will be measured using Dr. Hall’s (2015) STI 2.0 (see Appendix F for the permission letter). Hall and Edwards (1996; 2002) developed the initial instrument to measure spirituality from a relational perspective: the Spiritual Assessment Inventory 2.0 (Hall, 2015). The SAI has been used in over 100 empirical studies (Hall, 2015). As research about relational spirituality increased, a broader measurement became necessary due to further developments, particularly in attachment theory and the importance of a person’s emotional experience with God (Hall, 2015).

The first version of STI, used from 2003 to the Fall of 2011, was developed using relational spirituality theory and the Spiritual Assessment Inventory to build upon (Hall, 2015). STI 1.0 was replaced by version 2.0 and tested to show validity (Hall, 2015). STI 2.0 was developed, keeping relational spirituality as the theoretical basis while revising the domains and scales. STI 2.0 connects a range of different disciplines, including spirituality and the psychology of religion, to investigate topics such as relational maturity (Hall, 2015). The Connected Life model of spirituality was formed to organize a more precise framework, which included the revision and addition of the domains and scales (Hall, 2015).

The STI 2.0 uses 33 scales with five main domains derived from the Connected life model of spirituality (Hall, 2015). The Connected life model is based upon a relational model of spirituality to measure spiritual formation (Hall, 2015). The five domains 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). Responses from participants are based upon a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 – Very true of me to 6 – Very untrue of me (Hall, 2015). Cronbach’s alpha, used to measure the internal consistency of the group of STI scales, scored .87, indicating a high internal consistency (Hall, 2015; Goforth, 2015). The request to use the STI was applied for, and permission was received immediately upon payment of the research fee (see Appendix F for the permission letter).

Data Collection

Participant informational and follow-up letters will be proposed to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval. Upon obtaining IRB permission, research will be conducted as outlined. Consent and approval will be obtained from the Sandia Baptist Church leadership team (see Appendix B for the permission letter). A recruitment letter (see Appendix C for recruitment letter) and consent form for potential participants (see Appendix D for consent form) will be emailed to the Sandia Baptist Church leadership team to invite church leaders from Sandia Baptist Church to participate in the research. Church leaders include Pastors, Deacons, Adult Connection ministry leaders, Youth & Children Connection ministry leaders, and Finance committee members of Sandia Baptist Church. The informed consent letter will include demographic questions.

Using online surveys, the first 37 church leaders to return a signed consent form will be utilized for the research project. A thank-you letter will be emailed to each participant for agreeing to help in the study (see Appendix G). Online self-assessed surveys will be used to collect data over four weeks. Permission to use the LPI and STI instruments will be obtained from the IRB. Participant's contact information will be obtained. Participants will remain confidential. An email will be sent to each participant, including directions with embedded links to access the online survey information. Each participant's survey will be reviewed to ensure the correct correlation of the data.

When the online surveys are completed, scores from each survey will be collected and exported to SPSS 29 for analysis. SPSS is a statistical analysis software program. Individual responses and information will be kept confidential and stored on an external flash drive for three years. Once data analysis and the research project have been completed, a summary review of findings will be emailed to each participant and the churches participating in the study for review.

***STI data collection***

Participants will receive an email link with an invitation to complete the STI 2.0. When participants access and complete the survey, an email notification will be generated to communicate the data is ready for collection. Data will then be collected and recorded.  
***LPI data collection*** Participants will receive a link providing access to the LPI survey. Once participants respond to the questions, a notice of completion will be provided. Data will then be collected and recorded.

***Data Preparation***Each participant’s survey will be reviewed to ensure all questions have been answered. Surveys will be reviewed to eliminate any potential discrepancies and typing errors. The coefficients from the LPI and STI instruments will be imported to SPSS to prepare for analysis. Each variable will be assessed to determine frequency distribution and normality (Turney, 2023a).

Data Analysis

Data will be tested for normality and relevant assumptions of appropriate statistical procedures. Descriptive statistical procedureswill be performed for the STI and LPI, including the means, frequencies, and standard deviations. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were evaluated for the STI and LPI (Hall, 2015; Posner, 2016). These processes support the reliability of the study.

Pearson’s *r* bivariate correlation will be used to investigate if a positive relationship exists between church leaders’ spiritual formation, measured by the STI 2.0, and transformational leadership practices, measured by the LPI. SPSS 29 will be used to calculate the mean of composite scores for both the LPI and STI variables. The coefficients of the STI and LPI will be analyzed. A one-tailed procedure with Pearson’s *r* bivariate will be used to investigate if a relationship exists between the two variables.The results will be analyzed at a .05 significance level to ensure acceptability (Terrell, 2021).

Reliability & Validity

The sample size for the study will consist of 37 church leaders representing the leadership population of Sandia Baptist Church in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Greater generalizability to the population could be attained with a larger sample size. Convenience sampling will be used to generate the 37 participants from the population of 46 church leaders needed for a robust sample of the population.

A minimum of thirty-one participants is the appropriate sample size for a Pearson’s r correlation test based upon the calculation utilizing G\*Power. Participants will be selected using a convenience sampling method. The sample adequately reflects the population, protecting against external validity threats (Bhandari, 2023a). Construct validity minimizes external and internal threats to research validity by establishing correct methods of measurement (Middleton, 2023).

The research provides for strong reliability and internal consistency. Type I errors will be guarded against by setting the level of significance (alpha) at .05 (Terrell, 2021). Type II errors will be guarded against by establishing the statistical power at .9, higher than the generally accepted value of .8 (Terrell, 2021). Cronbach’s alpha measures the internal strength and reliability of a scale with an acceptable reliability coefficient of 0.7 (Goforth, 2015; UCLA, 2021). The alpha score for the LPI scale is .88, establishing the strong reliability of the scale (Posner, 2016). The alpha score for the STI 2.0 is .87, establishing a high reliability and internal consistency of the scale (Hall, 2015).

**Ethical Considerations**

The National Institute of Health (NIH) provides ethical guidelines to protect participants involved in research and the collection of data. Participants will be asked valid questions consistent with the NIH ethical principles: respect for social and clinical value, scientific validity, fair subject selection, favorable risk-benefit ratio, independent review, informed consent, and respect for potential and enrolled subjects (NIH, 2021). The NIH principles align with ethical research guidelines regarding the treatment of research participants provided in the Belmont Report(NIH, 2021).

Permission will be obtained from the Sandia Baptist Church for access to church leaders. Consent forms will be provided to potential participants to obtain permission and state a participant’s ability to withdraw without penalty at any time. Participants will not be discriminated against, will be treated equally, and will not suffer personally or professionally (Husband, 2020). Research will follow state and federal laws, ensuring volunteer participants' safety and respectful treatment.

The two study instruments, the STI 2.0 and LPI were submitted for IRB approval and were chosen because both are valid and reliable (Sürücü & Maslakçi, 2020). Data collection by surveys provides information to be evaluated through a quantitative correlation design, ensuring minimal risk to participants. When IRB approval is received, potential participants will receive a recruitment letter and consent form by email through the Sandia Baptist Church leadership team (see Appendices C & D). The consent form provides an overview of the research, details the requirements to participate in the study, and emphasizes the participant's rights.

The quantitative correlation research study is feasible due to appropriate time constraints and budget. Each participant's personal information will be kept confidential. Participant surveys will not be anonymous to ensure correct data correlation. Records will be stored on an external flash drive in the researcher's home safe to be deleted after three years. Results of the study will be made available to the leadership of Sandia Baptist Church without disclosing personal information. The research procedures will be appropriate, respectful, and trustworthy (NIH, 2021).

**Summary** **and Conclusion**

The research design rationale was detailed for the quantitative correlation study that will investigate a potential relationship between spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices. The sequencing of data collection and analysis was clarified. Research procedures were explained, including the purpose and research questions, the population and sample, instrumentation, data collection, preparation and analysis, the reliability and validity of the study, and ethical considerations. The next chapter expresses the data and explains the statistical findings from the research.

**Chapter Four: Summary of Results**

**Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations**

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**Appendix A: G\* Power Sample Size Calculation**

A screenshot of a computer

Description automatically generated

**Appendix B: Sandia Baptist Church Permission Letter**



**Appendix C: Recruitment Letter**

September 2, 2024

Sandia Baptist Church Leader

Dear Church Leader,

My name is Erik Christensen and I am a doctoral candidate with OMEGA Graduate School located in Crystal Springs, TN. I am inviting you to participate in a dissertation study designed to investigate if there is a relationship between church leaders’ spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices.

Sandia Baptist Church leaders in Albuquerque, New Mexico will be asked to participate in the study. Church leaders are defined for this study as one of the following: Pastors, Deacons, Adult Connection ministry leaders, Youth & Children Connection ministry leaders, and Finance committee members. The total population for this study is 46 church leaders from Sandia Baptist Church. The minimum number of participants is 31.Convenience sampling methods will be used to select the first 37 participants to sign the study consent form.

The research is a quantitative correlational study using Pearson’s r bivariate to determine if there is a positive relationship between a church leader’s spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices. Information will be collected and analyzed using two instruments: the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) and the Spiritual Transformation Inventory 2.0 (STI). The surveys will take @ 10 to 15 minutes each to complete.

Participating in the study is voluntary. No risks are associated with the research, and you may withdraw from participating at any point. Results from the study may be published; however, your name and the information you provide will be confidential.

If you are currently serving in one of the roles mentioned above and are interested in participating in the study and have any questions, please email me at [Erikc71@gmail.com](mailto:Erikc71@gmail.com) or call me at 609-405-0809. Thank you for considering participating in this important dissertation study.

Erik Christensen

Doctoral Student

OMEGA Graduate School

**Appendix D: Participation Consent Form**

**Introduction**: I am Erik Christensen, a doctoral candidate at OMEGA Graduate School in Crystal Springs, TN. Please review this consent form carefully and let me know if you have any questions prior to or after agreeing to participate in this study. All the research conducted will be supervised by Dr. Sean Taladay from OMEGA Graduate School.

**Project Information**

**Title**: Investigating the Relationship between Spiritual Formation and Transformational Leadership Practices: A Quantitative Study

**Researcher**: Erik M. Christensen

**Institution**: OMEGA Graduate School

**Email**: [Erikc71@gmail.com](mailto:Erikc71@gmail.com) **Phone**: 609-405-0809

**Purpose of the Research**  
The purpose of this correlational research study is to investigate if there is a relationship between a church leader’s spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices.

**Research Design and Procedures**

The research is a quantitative correlational study using Pearson’s r bivariate to determine if there is a positive relationship between a church leader’s spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices. Information will be collected and analyzed using two instruments: the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) and the Spiritual Transformation Inventory 2.0 (STI). The research will focus on Sandia Baptist Church Leaders located in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

**Participant selection**

Sandia Baptist Church leaders in the Albuquerque, New Mexico area will be asked to participate in the study. The minimum number of participants is 31. Convenience sampling methods will be used to select the first 37 participants to sign the study consent form.

**Voluntary Participation**

Participating in this study is voluntary.

**Procedures**

Participants will be given a consent form, including a short series of demographic questions to be signed. Two inventories, the STI 2.0 and LPI, will be provided to participants to fill out. Directions will be emailed to participants on how to fill out the surveys.

**Time Involved**

The surveys will take @ 10 to 20 minutes each to complete.

**Risks**

There are no risks associated with this study.

**Benefits**

Participants will help determine if a connection exists between a leader’s spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices.

**Confidentiality**:

Each survey will be stored on a flash drive and only used for this study. The flash drive will be kept in a secure location. Data will be deleted after three years.

**Sharing the Results**:

Participants will receive research results after surveys have been filled out and returned. The results of the study will be shared with participants and explained. Results will be published.

**Right to Refuse or Withdraw:**

Participants may withdraw from this study at any time.

**Questions about the Study**:

Participants can contact Erik Christensen either by email or phone with any questions. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the OMEGA Graduate School has approved the research. The IRB exists to ensure participants in the study are protected from harm. If you have a question for the IRB, email [cao@ogs.edu](mailto:cao@ogs.edu).

**Certificate of Consent**

I have read or have had read to me the information about this study. I understand why I have been invited to participate in the research. I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions about the study and have had my questions answered to my satisfaction. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age and voluntarily consent to participate in this study.

**Demographic Information**

Choose one of the following church leadership roles that best describe you:

Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ Deacon \_\_\_\_\_\_ Adult Connection ministry leader \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Youth & Children

Connection ministry leader \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Finance committee member \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

What is the total number of years you have served in a ministry leadership role? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

What is your highest level of ministerial education earned? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**  Date: **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

The participant was informed and provided the opportunity to ask questions about the research. Questions have been answered to the best of my ability.

Voluntary consent from the participant has been obtained without coercion and a copy of the consent form has been given to the participant.

Lead Researcher (Print): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Lead Researcher**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Appendix E: LPI Permission Letter**

A paper with text on it

Description automatically generated

A close-up of a document

Description automatically generated

**Appendix F: STI Permission Letter**

A white email with black text

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

**Appendix G: Participant Thank-you Letter**

**Date: TBD**

Recipient Name

Email

Dear \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you for voluntarily participating in the research study to determine if a positive relationship exists between leaders’ spiritual formation and transformational leadership practices. Research investigating the potential relationship between spiritual formation and leader practices is essential. Your involvement in this study is greatly appreciated. You will receive a report summarizing the overall findings. I trust the information will be of value to you and the leaders in your church as you serve the Lord.

Sincerely,

Erik Christensen