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Assessing Religious Leadership: A Scoping Review of Leadership Effectiveness Criteria and Current Trends in the Church

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Abstract: ***This scoping review aims to critically analyze various criteria for assessing leadership effectiveness within religious organizations, alongside current trends that inform our understanding of church leadership. The review encompasses a comprehensive exploration of existing literature, identifying key themes and gaps in the understanding of effective leadership practices within the church context.***

I. INTRODUCTION

Leadership is arguably essential in the context of Judeo-Christian scripture and within the contemporary Western Christian church. The wider church and church leadership have faced significant challenges over the course of recorded history evidenced in theological and popular literature. The leadership of local congregations also faces specific challenges including, among others, changing demographics, the rise of so-call megachurches and other para-church organizations, inter-church competition, the decreasing or plateauing numbers of congregations, institutional abuse of young and old church attendees and followers bearing and executing a Christian identity, a generational divide concerning conformity to traditional church ideology, the role of the LGBTQI community, and potential for the church to be both considered a hostile environment to secular or non-Christian members and proselytize to this group; these issues are often found interfactor being more than, for example, competitive. Effective leadership is considered the most important response to these challenges (B. Wells, 2016). Despite this leadership and, more specifically, the effectiveness of this leadership and the criteria by which it operates is a contradictory, embryonic, and somewhat contentious topic of interest within the later literature of the church. This review, therefore, seeks to advance our understanding of the criteria effectiveness of religious leadership by defining and critiquing current literature and any frameworks or models used. This research is necessarily exploratory in approach and is contingent on developing a scoping strategy for the vast, diverse, and somewhat diffuse academic literature of religion, ritual, doctrine, culture, spiritual well-being, group management, pastoral care of individuals, historical persecution, political lobbying of legislations, group realpolitik, economic and demographic forecasts, globalization, the growth of international denominations, and the many supportive or antagonistic responses to practices of worship.

A. Background and Rationale

This subsection of the article provides a comprehensive foundation for the understanding of religious leadership historically. The discourse of religious leadership is contextualized within other aspects of leadership theory and practice. It argues that an investigation of leadership effectiveness criteria in faith-based organizations and communities is timely, given increasing rates of change and uncertainty in the experience of leadership. The research rigor and relevance are justified with regard to the escalation of conflict and competitiveness in the world, cutting across both social and technological domains.

Leadership has been a salient aspect of religious belief and practice for thousands of years. Over time, various doctrines and practices surrounding religious leadership have developed. A particularly vivid image comes from the Christian tradition—the image of the Good Shepherd. This metaphor represents leader as caretaker, bandaging the wounded and restoring the flock to wholeness. In the pastoral literature of early Christianity, the imagery of the shepherd was developed into a de facto theory of leadership. With explanations of what disorders in the flock the leader must repair, what aspects of the flock's fabric the leader must form, and the qualities that the leader must have, the Good Shepherd metaphor provided a comprehensive backdrop for contemplation on the relationship between Christian leaders and their congregations (B. Wells, 2016).

Leadership was not necessarily an issue of power, but one of guidance and advice. Leaders were seen as those who exercise wisdom, modeling moral behavior and reflecting the guidance of a higher authority.

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In the history of the Church, leaders also assumed political power and maintained personal wealth, displaying a complexity in their behavior that was frowned upon by certain Biblical interpretations. In present times, the rich and powerful televangelist, for example, calls to mind not the Good Shepherd, but the image of the wolf in sheep's clothing. The jobs of religious leaders, those within ecclesiastical structures or those operating within the less formally defined clerical ruling elite, are complicated, given the rapid changes in society around them. With that in mind, religious leadership needs to carefully balance their role of envoy between their congregation and God with the outside demands of translation and having to deliver the same fundamental message in a world that has changed incalculably.

B. Purpose of the Scoping Review

The purpose of this scoping review is to methodically collect and examine existing academic sources on religious leadership of the past 20 years. The review's intended contribution is to identify leadership effectiveness criteria peculiar to religious contexts, for the field and practitioners to better focus on the measurement and development of religious leadership. Purposeful academic literature is gathered and synthesized, addressing existing academic understanding, providing evidence-based perspectives and implications, and identifying knowledge gaps to guide future research and practice (Hussain & Ashcroft, 2020). To the academic field, a structured approach to examining leadership effectiveness is provided, assisting scholars and researchers in engaging with and appraising leadership studies in the religious context. To church communities, it presents several measurement tools and resources that can facilitate the assessment and development of effective leadership. A scoping review examines a wide field to find gaps in the knowledge base or to identify topics that can be systematically reviewed. Church leadership is increasingly discussed in a growing number of studies as congregations struggle with various external challenges. Pastoral leadership has been recognized as one of the key factors for church growth, but the definition and effectiveness of pastoral leadership can vary depending on theological and denominational perspectives. This scoping review attempts to broadly review leadership studies in a religious context, examining a wide range of perspectives on leadership and methodology, appraising prevailing scholarly trends, and identifying emergent themes in recent studies. As an exploration of a largely unacknowledged area in contemporary society, it provides an in-depth but comprehensive overview of leadership studies in the church. Offering multiple views on religious leadership, it is intended for a broad spectrum of audience beyond the context of Christianity. The intersection between faith and leadership is explored across diverse religious communities, expanding the current dialogue on spirituality and leadership. By presenting multiple approaches to measure leadership effectiveness, it advises church and faith leaders on evidenced-based but practical considerations for enhancing leadership.

C. Scope and Objectives

This scoping review aims to identify and synthesize criteria and current trends relevant to the assessment of religious leadership effectiveness. It does so by exploring how the effectiveness of religious leadership is defined, measured, and discussed within the literature, and relative to for-profit and non-profit contexts alike. To this end, an analysis of scholarly research was undertaken with a primary focus on leadership within the context of theologically based organized religions, particularly with the Christian church.

The results suggest that there is a growing interest within the fields of organizational studies and pastoral theology in leadership theory and practice. It is advised that these fields contribute to a greater understanding of religious leadership practices, and with the inquiry that has suggested how such practices may compare and differ from non-profit leadership. This work identified three particular areas of discussion around religious leadership effectiveness. First, the widely discussed trend raises questions about the viability and legitimacy of applying modern business and management methods such as leadership effect studies, as well as new leadership theories and programs within a religious context. The second area of discussion related to the search for an undisputed theological foundation that would explain and legitimize the need for specific training and consistent effectiveness criteria for religious leaders. Third, subsequent discussions concern how the humility signal to followers, the adoption of dozens of solutions, and the lack of structure overlap with the notion of the inherent properties of the Church and the method of operation of the Church itself. It is important for a key player in religious leadership scholarship to investigate meta-analysis critiques of leader effectiveness research. The results also criticize the singularity of the predominant normative priesthood and are treated as a fixed practice model for Christian clergy. This work suggests exploring the juxtaposition of issues addressed in both research streams. It also broadens the view of religious leadership while also examining the criteria and criteria of leadership effectiveness in spiritual traditions other than the Christian church. Yet, what belongs to the non-profit context is seen to exercise a broad range of socially significant leadership, on the one hand the church and the religious leaders of the church, and on the other hand the development of the theory of non-profit leadership.

However, the church and the organized religion have difficulties in adopting standards, methods, and practices of effective leadership, as they may be perceived to be and are incompatible with religious beliefs or fundamental religious practices. Eventually, church and religion scholars (to a lesser extent than non-profit or for-profit scholars), as well as preachers, pastors (with some exceptions), theologians, monastics, etc. began to engage seriously in discussing, researching and implementing the making of aware and informed religious leaders. What was found is a significant and ancient discrepancy between the analysis of for-profit leaders in normal organizations and leaders in churches, especially so much conventionally. It is sought for academic reasons to catch up with the fields connected to the Church and pastoral theology quickly. At first, it was impossible to grasp all such a dispersed topic in a single study, because the term leadership is broad and vague enough, especially in the treatment of the Church, to fishing it all in. At best, be non-uniform search-methods in many different scientific and religious disciplines so common. This review also complements and extends the latest systematic research syntheses. On the other hand, denomination with such precision with term criteria of leadership effectiveness was not caught. Furthermore, religious leadership criteria have not been comprehensively considered alongside the need for meta-analysis and meta-analytical review, as well as discussions of the training-eligibility assumption, the theological-biblical perspective, and the different functioning IP that there could be no way to include in a more general and thematic study.

II. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this scoping review is to examine the performance criteria used in evaluating the effectiveness of religious leadership. The Holy Bible primarily is used by diverse denominations and religious faiths globally. However, this hermeneutic biblical exegesis neither is a systematic theology nor is it biased for/against a particular religious denomination, church polity faith, confession or ecclesial practice. The interpretation approach of the officially recognized biblical canon, in this exegetical biblical analysis, primarily will reveal common sacred truths. Research examining religious ecclesial significance, sacred tradition acceptance, historical maturation and diverse biblical clauses rhetorically of teachings, proverbs, parables, psalms, laws or catechisms. A bibliometric literature survey and data analysis were conducted, in which multiple religious research papers and reviews were considered qualitatively. Collected academic data includes this omnipresent Spiritual Bible, which is utilized in ancient holy liturgies, rites, sacraments, confessions, canons or catechisms. A plethora diverse biblical verses, that were compiled on religious or ecclesial effectiveness entire secular scholarship, incorporates variable bibliometric topics, and parochial domain considerations, researching concerning sacred spiritual trust criteria and religious leadership quality. The word of Apostle Paul of Biblical Corinthians states, asserts, advises and recommends, "Leaders of Church must be irreproachable, not self-willed, not grudging gain but generous … duly dignified, holding fast to religious doctrine so as to exhort in sound doctrine and refute to able contradictors."

A. Search Strategy and Selection Criteria

The scoping review is informed by a framework proposed by Arksey and O'Malley (Hussain & Ashcroft, 2020). Another review method adapted will also be recognized. Search parameters are then outlined, along with the inclusion criteria implemented to filter the search results. Lastly, the papers are categorized using a theological basis in an effort to maintain consistency throughout the paper and ensure a balanced perspective of religious leadership. Select findings are summarized by theme, which are also organized using theological categories. The review considers works that evaluate leaders by the criteria that followers use to assess them (i.e., follower-focused criteria). Because much of the work on measuring the effectiveness of religious leadership is descriptive, it also considers criteria developed for secular leaders and notes whether these criteria are used in the context of religious leadership. To this end, a focused search strategy examines the effectiveness of religious leadership using the criteria with which followers assess those leaders. Given renewed interest in the importance of the church, current trends are included where they intersect with the literature found. The scoping review aims to summarize existing findings, rather than report new data, and so it is weighted toward recent work, with research on religious leadership from 2000 to the present being emphasized. Finally, despite an extensive search complying with PRISMA standards, the review is necessarily limited in scope, by constituency within the English speaking world, the focus on recent output, and the persistent shortage of work that assesses religious leadership especially by the criteria with which followers assess it.

B. Data Extraction and Synthesis

Recognizing that there is a standard platform to designate the qualities that ensure effective leadership, a scoping review of religious leadership has not yet been executed. The aim, therefore, is to investigate leadership effectiveness criteria demarcated in the numerical literature and to approach the study of current trends in the ecclesial field.

The study seeks to answer the following questions: "How does the numerical literature on religious leadership frame the grounding of leadership effectiveness?", "What are the concurrences, developments, and vents in the ecclesial field that impact the prerequisites of leadership effectiveness?". A scoping review is realized on acquired texts by categorizing and synthesizing the findings in order to detect recurrent designs, threads, fills, or flaws in postulations and commandments. The exploration is informed by the scoping review into religion and leadership (Hult et al., 2023). The papers are first-hand codified and interpreted, and then alternative approaches are proposed and the contradictions between them are highlighted.

The categorization of findings is realized by systematical conception analysis and codification of 87 items acquired through the primary and secondary sources. The concept analysis of findings directs on individual-themed depictions of leadership effectiveness. The goal is to direct within each theme to mutual observations. The acquisition of pertinent readings is realized through keyword browsing in academic databases and exploring the citations of the more reviewer papers (Hussain & Ashcroft, 2020). Standardized data is coded on leading effectiveness inquiries in an Excel sheet and interpreted in conception analyses. Further findings are filtered into related thematic trays in order to allow parallel interpretation. Redundant findings and translation of findings are filtered out. Individually-coded findings are interpreted in writing. The aim of this review is to frame the grounding of leadership effectiveness by systematical conception analysis of the obtained literature. The simple and comprehensive mathematical facts on these are followed in codes and several additional masses.

III. LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS CRITERIA IN RELIGIOUS CONTEXTS

Biblical and theological understandings of the role and actions of leadership in ecclesial context have defined, at least implicitly, criteria for what constitutes an effective religious leader. Religious scholars and theologians have debated the nature of ecclesial "offices" and "orders" and their interrelation for centuries. Structures of church leadership and models of leadership effectiveness in religious context have been both very much delineated and deeply ingrained in church practices. Undoubtedly the best-known, and most influential, models or forms of primary church leadership are the Catholic and Presbyterian, systems of popes/cardinals/bishops and ministers/elders/deacons, respectively. These models have largely been normative for how church leadership has been conducted and evaluated for many generations of Christians due to formal and informal training of pastors and the "lion's share" of church leadership studies, research on the effectiveness of religious leadership has been conducted from, and used the tools of, organizational psychology, and so the pre-existing models—such as Bass and Avolio's MLQ, as just one example—of leadership effectiveness have been more secularly-oriented models of "individualized consideration" and "transformational leadership." As a result, and in response to, the unceasing litany of crises affecting the Church, more recent research into religious organizations and their leaders has attempted to broaden the definition of what constitutes religious leadership as well as its effectiveness (B. Wells, 2016). A study of church leadership in a Nigerian context, albeit lacking empirical analyses, pointed to a rapidly changing environment that had "outgrown" longstanding religious conceptions of leadership effectiveness, arguing instead for a situational, and more secular, model of relational leadership, distributed leadership, and cross-cutting networks (Afolorunso Olalekan, 2014). Such models and frameworks were argued to "hold sway" for contemporary church societies, no less than did the CGS or RC for the European societies of the past, and would likely be the models selected by empirical researchers interested in evaluating church leadership effectiveness. This creates an important gap in the literature as movements and denominations for which the traditional, historical, models of Catholic and Presbyterian leadership are less normative—but which are perennially source of interest and debate, such as Pentecostals, Baptists, Charismatics, and new and emergent church families—are also likely to have distinct, and even novel to the context of faith institutions, forms of ecclesial leadership and structure. The church has long been a central institution within American society. Some six-in-ten U.S. adults (62%) say they attend religious services at least once a month, and roughly one-third say they go to church every week. While these numbers have been in decline since the early 1970s and fell dramatically between 2006 and 2007, the religious market is by no means saturated. Despite significant fluctuations within religious adherence and attendance numbers, church congregations continue to be formed, dissolved, and re-formed—in 2012 there were an estimated 345,000 churches in the US—and as a result there is a continuous need for men and women to fill the many and various roles attendant to church leadership. Still, despite the immense social and organizational importance of the church and the continuing interest in its social scientific study, remarkably little attention has been paid to its leadership styles and structures. At present, a majority of churches use a form of Denominational Autonomy and a pure Populism model, while only 18% of churches have formalized some kind of Presbyterian or Episcopal structure, indicating very little adaption of the Religious Bureaucracy model. The correspondence of leadership models to church families in the US may not be surprising, nonetheless it raises important questions about the role and practices of church leadership.

In light of the collapse of the Religious Bureaucracy model in American churches, it is imperative that new models and understandings of religious leadership be explored along with a re-imagining of how to measure the effectiveness of such leadership within church institutions, both for the good of these institutions and for the broader understanding of how religious institutions respond to, and themselves shape, their normative environment.

A. Biblical and Theological Foundations

The onset of leadership has its roots in scarce, authoritative mandates, endowing those appointed with spiritual, social, and political responsibilities. The Bible institutionalizes leadership roles in chieftains, judges, prophets, priests, and kings, upholding numerous fundamental values and behaviors for exemplary religious leadership. Commonly echoed calls to concern for the poor, widows, orphans, and strangers spotlight ethical executives and societal advocates in the Church today. With the advent of Christ, a radical definition and praxis of leadership is foreseen through the Suffering Servant figurine portrayed in Isaiah, ultimately fulfilled through Christ Himself as the Good Shepherd. Christ-centered theological praxis models emphasize servanthood, empowerment, love, and outreach, visibly seen through the advertisement of social, spiritual, and material poverty. In addition to preaching the Gospel, numerous missionary and evangelical activities are advocated in order to flourish Christ's church on earth due to theological instructions to employ a redemptive, penitential ministry while gathering and reconciling the dispersed children of God.

By integrating faith and action, theological guidelines in religious leadership propose principles that are more than mere proselytization or advancement of the Christian Church, emphasizing the sacramental nature of leadership as a divine ministry to construct and root the City of the enduring God and focusing on the moral principle and working towards peace and prosperity between countries. Additionally, reasoning is made of the commonly controlled importance of protecting religious freedoms or liberties, fearfully recognizing the terror of empire, whether it manifests in historical Babylon, coming eschatological Babylon, or any modern superpower that opposes the authoritative claims of Christ and prompts idolatrous allegiance (B. Wells, 2016). The Bible-based spiritual commitments imposed upon religious executives can be adhered without implementing conventional ecclesiastical and pastoral proceedings, yet these theological directions can significantly affect leadership efficacy in appealing spiritual foresight screening and persuasive Christian coaching leadership. Ample scrutiny has disclosed the scriptural and theological principles that form the spiritual side of leadership; nevertheless, there has been painless try to blend these decrees with the ascendant principles of leadership effectiveness. Cooperation amid ecclesial and secular experts is required to investigate the distinctiveness and utility of these classical biblical directions for the examination of current leadership problems, challenges, and strategies in order to provide an understanding of the religious leadership implementation in today's society.

B. Traditional Leadership Models

Religious organizations have long been interwoven with the fabric of society and have thus played an important role in the development of many traditional leadership models. Much like all organizations, religious organizations operate under hierarchical models with spiritual leaders holding privileged positions over laypersons. Over the centuries, this leadership structure has consistently been conceptualized in many similar forms, often with the priesthood leading the laity (K Miller, 2014). Contemporary religious leadership is faced with how to function within this highly standardized traditional background of church structures, yet still allowing freedom for creativity and innovative leadership. This tension between historical normativity and a desire for innovation is complex.

Traditional models of religious leadership are primarily based on historical foundations, yet these models are sources of current leadership theories and development. There are basic hierarchical structures that combine the performance of religious duties. Along with these basic models are other leadership roles and responsibilities that also develop generationally; but certain roles are never fully realized. The Church, like many other religious organizations, continues with similar models and responsibilities, though there is some variation across denominations. Additionally, the church must regularly adapt to the current social environment with attention to religious development. Obviously, ongoing development shifts the leadership structure and responsibilities of the spiritual leaders, though the historical roles remain fixed in canonization. This varied focus suggests the diversity of the religious leadership model. For the purpose of this paper, an overview of how the basic roles of church leadership have evolved and developed over the years in the context of the Church will be provided. The formation and strength of each model, as well as their weaknesses and ongoing challenges, will be indicated. It will also be considered how each model has affected various leadership competencies and how historical leadership practices can assist with current leadership issues faced by the Church. The historical approach to religious leadership provides a basis for understanding current issues and is essential for building effective future models of church leadership.

C. *Emerging Leadership Theories*

In the church, traditional views of leadership are derived from certitudes about pastor-centered ministry, the absolute goodness of Christian values, and the role of religion in the moral education of congregants. Yet, contemporary religious and secular environments are often marked by change, diversity, and dissent, issues that classical religious leadership theories fail to address (P. Meade, 2008). The Emerging Leadership Theories sub-section identifies intellectual and field-disciplinary frameworks separated from the psychology of religion and theology that redefine the criteria of leadership effectiveness in parishes. It takes into account a variety of innovative contemporary leadership theories and models that have not yet entered the field of ecclesiology and the Church. The innovative character of highlight theories is determined by their ongoing fulfilment in response to current challenges, not necessarily ecclesial ones. It is contended that the most effective model of leadership in pastoral churches is the one capable of creating commonality among congregants through their interaction. This commonality should be based on both accepting the positive self-concept of the congregants as well as valuing their particular needs, hurts, and social location. Therefore, the concept of Gemeinschaftsgefühl was used as a key criterion of transformational leadership in Church parishes (Avolio et al., 2009). The Emerging Leadership Theories sub-section identifies a variety of innovative contemporary leadership theories and models that redefine the criteria of leadership effectiveness in parishes. Some of the modern leadership theories listed above are already applied to ecclesial studies or to pastoral churches, but there are no examples that would undertake a wide presentation of the potential correspondence of these theories with the Church.

IV. CURRENT TRENDS IN CHURCH LEADERSHIP

This scoping review identifies and discerns prevalent criteria for effective leadership in the church. Furthermore, it addresses the current trends which affect and influence leadership development in the local church. Four current trends will be analyzed and discussed: Technology, Diversity and Inclusion, Globalization, and Eco-awareness and Infrastructure Reallocation. With the changes in communication, teaching, fellowship, and administration that have taken place in the Ecclesia, it is imperative to research what and how these criteria are understood in the modern church context. Also, it seeks to identify gaps in current researcher understanding so that more effective leadership development programs can be established.

Current Trends in Church Leadership:

1) Technology: Everyday advances in technology continue to change the way we live, communicate, and relate to one another in society. The Church environment is not immune to such changes either. Attendance at traditional Church services is being exchanged for watching sermons online or through small digital platforms through the week. Technological advances, though modern convenience, are changing the way faith is practiced and what attendance at a local church looks like (E. Roberson, 2005).
2) Diversity and Inclusion: Our society and therefore our community, is becoming increasingly more multicultural. To meet the needs of a community, a local Church must adapt its methodology and understand societal needs. The body of Christ is inclusive of all people and the world itself was designated to explain the glory of God. However, at this stage in society, the Church should also be mindful to cater to and understand the needs of minority groups in the local area.
3) Globalization: ‘Go and make disciples of all nations’ arguably the great commandment to the church suggests some level of globalization. With such interconnectivity now, Globalization is not simply about ensuring people from many nations know Jesus. Rather, it is about dialogue and collaboration between faiths and understanding and acceptance of one another.
4) Eco-awareness and Infrastructure Reallocation: Church buildings are a growing investment and carbon consuming. However, it is beneficial to note there is no design specification for God’s House on earth in the new testament. Large investments could be better utilized to meet what the Bible does specify, not that it is wrong to have a building but it must be used wisely.

A. *Adaptation to Technological Advances*

Falling in line with the rapid technological changes that are continuously taking place across diverse areas of life, religious leaders are also increasingly adapting to advances in technology. While maintaining and relying on traditional practices, religious leaders can effectively integrate technology such as digital teaching materials, social media, or podcasts. Such tools and platforms are often used at church to enhance internal operations or to connect better with their congregants. Through the use of certain digital tools, religious leaders are better able to make themselves accessible to their community. Not only are they opening up more ways for followers to approach them with questions, but they are also able to communicate their vision and goals more clearly.

This practice is particularly key for new religious leaders, who need to navigate and integrate into an existing network. In turn, a greater level of understanding and care for the community engenders trust and loyalty among the people (D Wellington, 2017). Moreover, in an era that increasingly values experiences and community, religious leaders are using various tech platforms and tools to facilitate the gathering of the community. They serve to organize church group activities or of the like. Overall, it is through the application of certain practices that religious leaders are better able to broaden their scope and reach more people within and without their community. Updates on church events, partnerships or guest involvements are just a fraction of the information that are being communicated in the hope to engage and attract wider publics. In addition to that, tech is being used to relay religious teachings, to share the message digitally. While through this practice ethical and moral issues may arise that can be further looked upon, in the long run preaching through podcasts or live streaming religious ceremonies is what technology is all about, moving a step forward. However, as more and more religious leaders take to digital platforms to preach kindness, humanity, and devotion, new challenges and opportunities for development follow. It is argued that maintaining a personal relationship with the community is challenging through screens, as they attenuate human interaction. However, religious leaders are exposed as more relatable and therefore precious. Especially in a more post-postmodern society, where the traditional role of the religious leader is either obsolete or shrouded in mystery. Further, the necessity for religious leaders to be tech savvy in order to appeal and better engage younger publics drives more research in this area. Consequently, findings on practices or steps that religious leaders can take are discussed in the hope to effectively share their religious viewpoints and practices to new audiences. Finally, discussing how tech can be used to spread false religious truths and the potential consequences of this practice. Offering a more balanced perspective, a current look at how religious leaders can make use of Digital Network Technology. Rather than an in-depth look at one particular facet of religion, these viewpoints urge the regulation of particular practices or suggest steps that religious leaders can take, acknowledging the importance of technology to religion.

B. Diversity and Inclusion Efforts

Religious communities are highly diverse and have unique norms that often guide relational behavior, and, as a result, conflict behavior. Because this is such a prevalent and critical area of interest, having a dedicated body of research is needed. A specific area of research on religiosity and conflict, particularly focusing on responses to transgressions, intrapsychic phenomena, or a lack in mediation, would be quite valuable. This kind of research program would be good not only for greater understanding of religiosity and beliefs, but also for practical values of informing mediators and institutions on how to effectively engage these types of disputants. Building a conflict resolution movement within religion could also work to bring about larger change in how religion is used to address inter- and intra-personal dilemmas. Church leadership matters. The church is an institution that promulgates normative values to its followers, values that shape everyday behavior, including behavior within legal processes. Church ministers are the face that laypersons see in these organizations as exemplars of religious values and morality. Given their institutional role in furthering the normative moral values of their church, it should come as no surprise that litigants are more likely to expect moral values from church defendants and have more faith in their moral reliability. Research on this unique combination of religiosity and institutions could suggest new directions for conflict research and has potentially large policy implications. That litigants who identify as more strongly religious have higher expectations reflects unique conflicts held by these laypersons. Therefore, it is important to study religiosity on its own terms and not conflate it with spirituality or new-age beliefs. Similarly, the stark contrast between clergy and religious lay defendants suggests more focused bodies of research are needed on the effects of religious defamation.

C. Globalization and Interfaith Dialogue

Contemporary church leaders increasingly face the challenges of an evermore-globalized world and the theological and cultural pluralizing thereby entailed. Moreover, the free exchange of ideas and information across the world fuels new revival movements of both indigenous and denominational popularity. At the same time, more than 75% of the world's population reportedly has little or no access to social security and is hence deprived of essential resources. This not only leads to an Afghanistani population in fear and despair, but also to genocide in Rwanda and to the Ethiopian church struggling against poverty, corruption, and the spread of AIDS. It is in times like these that church leadership is in dire need of not only adaptation but transformation. Social media unites the world in real time as never before. As crises and threats eclipse geographical boundaries, they urge for global awareness, global ministries, and global responses. Globalization shows that we are on this planet together, calling for mutual responsibility with regard to environmental, social, and political challenges (Hassanzadeh et al., 2015).

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Amid the rapidly expanding encounter between diverse cultures and religions, and conversely the rise of identity politics and religious fundamentalism, it is interesting to ask how religious leaders deal (or do not deal) with these challenges denominationally and ecumenically. As religions are never isolated islands but parts of intricate networks with flows of people, goods, culture, belief, and value, the re-emergence of religion and the simultaneous call for dialogue and cooperation highlight the necessity to study religion from a global perspective. From an ecumenical or even interreligious point of view, church leaders have to develop a sophisticated cross-cultural and interreligious competence. In a pluralistic world, where religions and beliefs are brought into close contact after centuries of separation, it will be a prerequisite for the future as well as for the common quality of human life. This might foster not only more peaceful co-existence or co-operation, but also respectful distinction or even desire and admiration for the beauty of otherness. At the same time, churches are seriously challenged by globalization. It affects local practices and traditions, on the one hand by re-articulating these in Western terms, on the other hand imposing a Western culture generally seen as dominated by a highly commercialized and linguistically frameless popular culture. Rising wealth and prosperity in the North largely induced by globalization, and the simultaneous growing poverty and marginalization of the South, threaten to iron out the rich texture of the world's many cultures with often devastating consequences. In this light it may also be worth reflecting how the emerging interfaith activities can grasp the communicative potential to contribute to both the problem-awareness, problem-solving and respectful celebration of the richness of the planet Earth's configuration. Through a brief analysis of existing models of interfaith dialogue relevant to the Church, it is argued that ways of dealing with the threat of globalization on the local should draw on locally based and context-specific initiatives. At the same time, in order to appreciate and cooperate constructively in the great challenge educed by the globalized pluralism, an awareness of local perspectives will greatly enhance the deepening of the global issue. Indeed, a mutually enriching developmental process to the highest degree seems to be characterized by the combination of the most global perspectives with the most local practices.

V. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Given their status as moral leaders, religious leaders face a number of ethical challenges that require solid moral decision making. Modern religious leaders are faced with a variety of ethical dilemmas that emanate from societal pressures, internal conflicts, differing perceptions among the congregants in assisting congregants to faithfully fulfill their vocation (Sparkman, 2012). The effectiveness criteria for religious leader demonstrate that the ability to make ethical/moral decisions was key. The rate of mistreatment of clergy by congregants and by other clergy is higher than rates of mistreatment by any other group of professional social service providers and that the clergy-member or clergy-clergy relationship account for more than two-thirds of incidents of mistreatment. This highlights the importance of using moral decision making to determine appropriate responsiveness by the religious leader when facing acts of mistreatment within the congregation and denomination.

Religious organizations continue to play a significant role in local, national, and international matters. Given the value of these organizations, religious leaders need to understand potential ways to foster organizational resilience. Organizations in a variety of fields are expected to plan for successful transitions and have systems in place to ensure continuity when a high level of leadership departs their organization. Therefore, another set of criteria that pertained to leadership effectiveness was the perceived ability of the leader to focus on issues of strategic importance for the long-term development of the congregation and denomination. Participants suggested a closer look at the effectiveness of religious leaders to foster organizational resilience and to plan for the organization's future direction. Participants also emphasized the tolerance for church congregations and institutional multiplicity as effectiveness criteria and that may have the potential to foster the involvement of churches in the social and commercial spheres.

A. Ethical Dilemmas and Moral Leadership

Ethical dilemmas are being afield. Just recently a pastor distributed new books via his e-mail newsletter. The authors agreed to notify him about new releases, and he had never rejected any request or had limited the number of distribution. But think about it! Just recently, a certain couple left the church. What if they received the newsletter? What if they noticed a book promotional banner right below the announcement of the successful International Food Day outreach program facilitated by the new female lead pastor? There might be rumors that she uses underhand methods to get the head pastor fired. Cozy relationships with other men seem to "prove" it. Others have seen them together in a vegetarian restaurant. Protestant pastors in a certain East European country are known to refrain from any alcohol consumption due to the perceived negative example. Can a beer be consumed in a social setting under these circumstances? At a pastor's conference, a deacon contemplates collaboration with a non-evangelical local politician, even if it might be beneficial for the congregation. However, it is also well-known that the mayor wants a share in "and" for her corporation.

They presumably talk about a contract. Stock market quotes are also talked about. Can I do this? After all, I am talking to a fiduciary. Or can it be done since the collaboration has not yet started? Its announcement would follow if there was an agreement.
This section discusses the relationship between ethical dilemmas and religious leadership through real cases. Churches are perceived as sanctuaries and hubs of morality. Non-theologians, including atheists, expect clergy to undertake "good deeds." The complexity of moral leadership is grounded in the eternal presence of competing values and expectations. Moral integrity is compromised by conflicting duties. Ethical leadership is critical for maintaining trust in faith communities. Accusations of misconduct against religious leaders appeal to both spirituality and pragmatism. Deeds must abide by stated faith while satisfying a broad spectrum of congregational needs. Striking this fragile balance is a daunting task. External interference exacerbates tensions. In today's secular environment, alleged impropriety quickly escalates to scandal regardless of objective facts. Anticipating and addressing moral challenges demands deep thoughtful reflection. Moral leadership must be established in an encompassing faith-based ethical framework. Influential societal values may run counter to church traditions. Any call to action can involve moral doubts. Before setting a course, pastors should earnestly explore these feelings. Paradoxically, ethical lapses carefully weighing all pros and cons precede irrefutable decisions as many never are.

B. Navigating Political and Social Issues

Religious leadership and its associated role impacts society, culture, movement, perception, power, morality, and language. Political climates vary and shift and, with changes in a society's capabilities and dynamics, leadership must evolve to sustain a relationship with their constituencies. Some environments are combatant, where issues may include theocratic and secular lobbying, religious and cultural identity, repression, prosecution, persecution, or a negative stigma toward the prominent or vocal. For leaders, the clearest way to navigate a social issue may be clear and free from opinion. But at the same time, many constituents may expect leaders to take a stance; many might even feel an obligation to act and to defend others. Openly engaging a political topic can forge a relationship between the leader and the community through the examination of its health and education, welfare, and legal system, or its advocacy on morality, ethics, equality, and beliefs. A society may fragment into groups of various beliefs; a leader, sometimes so located, can provide an agitation between these separated entities, help communicate with one another, offer themselves as a mode of understanding, or accept a neutral stance in peaceful resolution. But where dialogue is closed, it can manifest violence, physical torture, and war. Any of these roles can result in community gratitude and loyalty, further resulting in a tendency for a leader to be persuasive or vocal on additional political matters.
Religious leaders hold great power and influence within their congregations and wider communities. They have the ability to shape the belief systems, attitudes, and values of those with whom they come into contact. Society in general, and its political climate in particular, is always changing, leading to changes in power dynamics and how local communities interact with wider phenomena. Very broadly, there are two types of political and social issues that religious leaders may be called upon to grapple with. The first are those that are local to a congregation or community: homelessness in that area, for instance. The second are larger scale, national or international events which a community or congregation experiences as a corporate body, such as the rise of extremist groups or far-right political parties. Like any other public figure, religious leaders need to be aware of the political and social connotations of the issues they become associated with (Kruger Hilger, 2018).

C. Mentorship and Succession Planning

This scoping review focuses on the criteria that evaluate the effectiveness of religious leadership and its role in the survival and development of the church. Therefore, it includes content on the most prominent successions and the corresponding leadership effectiveness criteria and current U.S. religious trends related to church health, leadership, and new forms of multisite or online churches. Among the rise of successful and innovative religious organizations since the early 2000s, there is an emergent field of research centering on their leadership styles, strategies, and organizational structures. The criteria for religious leadership effectiveness vary across the developments and cultures of different religious organizations. Rather than narrow the scope to elegance or longevity, this scoping review will focus on the criteria that evaluate the effectiveness of a religious leader in terms of the overall well-being Successfully meeting the challenging demands of leading a religious organization (Orsborne Gleaves, 2017) and on the ways in which religious leadership interacts with and exerts an impact on the church as an organization. This scope is guided by the following questions: What are the criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of church leadership? How do these criteria interact with the survival and developmental needs of the church as an organization? In exploring these questions, this review will mainly focus on the issue of succession and offer some bibliographical research of the lay of the land in terms of literature addressing this issue (Tingling, 2018).

As evidenced by the uncommonly large size of the body of text, succession is of special concern in the U.S. church field where social trends, organizational structures, and normative practices tend to influence each other in profound ways.

VI. CONCLUSION

This scoping review seeks to answer the question "According to currently available evidence in peer-reviewed literature, what criteria are used to assess religious leaders in Christian churches for their leadership effectiveness and are there current trends in how the assessment of religious leadership effectiveness is performed?" The reviewed literature will focus on several themes for assessing leadership effectiveness in a church setting and will touch on contemporary trends when available. The themes found are alienation, reconciliation, personnel, messages, and skills seen in primarily Seventh-day Adventist and United Methodist traditions. Trends indicate a departure from traditional textual training in return for more non-standard approaches or focus in techno- or leadership field. The endeavor of pastoral leadership is a hallmark appeal of large church congregations. With a careful blend of inspirational, motivational, educational, and organizational approach, leadership and congregations can produce dramatic spiritual renewal, vast growth, and an expanded service to the surrounding community. Yet in many smaller church settings, leaders consider themselves surprisingly inadequate, ever unprepared, and often unworthy of their Christian calling. Standing in the shadows of a much revered predecessor, new pastoral leaders may find their new assignments hopelessly challenging, even unwinnable (B. Wells, 2016). Rather than anticipating their adjusting authoritarian control and personalistic style orientation, parishioners begin to view their delegated leaders as insincere, demanding, or simply unreasonable.

A. Key Findings and Implications for Practice

This scoping review has identified both the historical and current state of leadership effectiveness criteria, illustrating the most important variables of successful leadership, including moral standards and successful community engagement. In terms of leadership effectiveness criteria, the review has shed light on several implications for practice. Traditional criteria models may be best complemented by more modern and contextually reflective theories. The most contemporary theories consider dimensions of leadership that are in line with the needs of communities in this day and age. As this paper's analysis indicates, religious leadership is not exempt from the necessity to adopt a more complex, multi-dimensional model of leadership practice. The establishment of leadership effectiveness criteria can guide leadership practices that enhance the process of community engagement beneficial for both religious leaders and the community. For religious leaders, it behooves them to be astute about the needs, values, and expectations of the diverse and complex congregations they serve. For religious communities, the research brings awareness of the effectiveness of leadership practices employed by their leaders or, as the case may be, their absence, contributing to a more informed and confident participation and support of religious leadership and community activities. This scoping review identifies an array of implications for religious leaders, their respective communities, and policy makers, guiding the development of religion in a manner of increasing well-being and social responsibility as individuals and as members of the wider community. Generally, religious leaders and subsequent communities are encouraged to consider the best match between leadership theory and practice and the type and specific context of religious congregations, allowing the right fit between the leaders, their communities, and the modalities and goals of leadership practice within the tenets of the religious tradition. At the same time, leaders need to be more adaptive and responsive to the fast-pace changes that characterize the social trends and expectations (B. Wells, 2016). The results of the scoping review could be used to inform the training and professional development of future and incumbent religious leaders, facilitating (a) the acquisition of a broader set of skills that fully address the complexity and diversity of the role of religious leadership within a contemporary cultural and faith context, and (b) the development of programs, practices, and activities to inculcate and imbibe ethical constructs as well as trustworthiness and accountability across the generation of current and future leaders. These findings can be used to develop a framework of criteria and standards against which leadership could be evaluated or held accountable. Policy makers may consider introducing grants, financial incentives, and mentorship opportunities for religious leaders and their detentions, translating into a new generation of religious leaders which can foster public health priorities, compliance with guiding health and ethical standards, ultimately contributing to institutionalization and normalization of the trust of communities in religious leadership. In its direct application and translational perspective, the scoping review aims to bridge the realm of research with that of practice and having meaningful insights and evidence bases that can inform policy-making and empower religious leaders in their roles. In this context, synthesis and analysis of leadership effectiveness criteria and current trend can contribute to the better understanding and monitoring of religious leadership practice, paving a way for more informed and applied future research initiative that can be conducive to change and guide a professionalism in the management of religion practice.

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From an academic stance, the proposed analysis adds to the acquisition of new competencies and knowledge in the emerging discipline of religious studies, which would allow the development of a broader context of evidence and underpinning research that can be used to bolster and consolidate the field of religious studies, research and publication, advocacy and academic innovation. Ultimately, this scoping review primarily endeavors to outline the burgeoning forms of religious leadership practice, explaining trajectories of change that have been set against the diverse needs and values of growing religious communities across the denominations and continents. For the religious scholars, religious leaders, representatives of the religious communities, as well as in the broader lay audience, the paper aspires to become a forum of a thoughtful reflection on the future of religious leadership practices becoming a road-map by which the better-informed decisions can be borne, harder debates settled, and novel traditions set.

B. Limitations and Future Research Directions

This article has significant implications for methodology and the canon of leadership research. Despite attempts to identify all available literature, the findings are limited to the extent that key words were not used consistently by multiple scholars. Literature searches beginning in the last three months of 2019 found that a majority of the additional articles are not searchable by key words included in this search. The initial search for this review began in February 2019. This has to omit work by major authors working in the area of faith and management. This high-stakes context is interesting because of management challenges and implications for hundreds of millions of individuals.

Although significant progress has been made both in management and religion, many aspects of effective religious leadership remain under-examined, such as the personal attributes of religious leaders, efficacy of clergy training, programs specific to religious organizations, conceptions of leadership built on religious beliefs and teachings developed in religious contexts, and the unique effects of religious leadership on follower well-being and behaviour. Last, forms of review bias, the analysis of self-reported limitations, offer promising ways of advancing leadership theory and research.

This paper also has limitations. First, literature searches had to be constrained pragmatically. Second, not all possible outcomes of limitational research were assessed. Third, interpretability may be limited, despite transparency checks. This addresses these limitations and suggests paths for future research.

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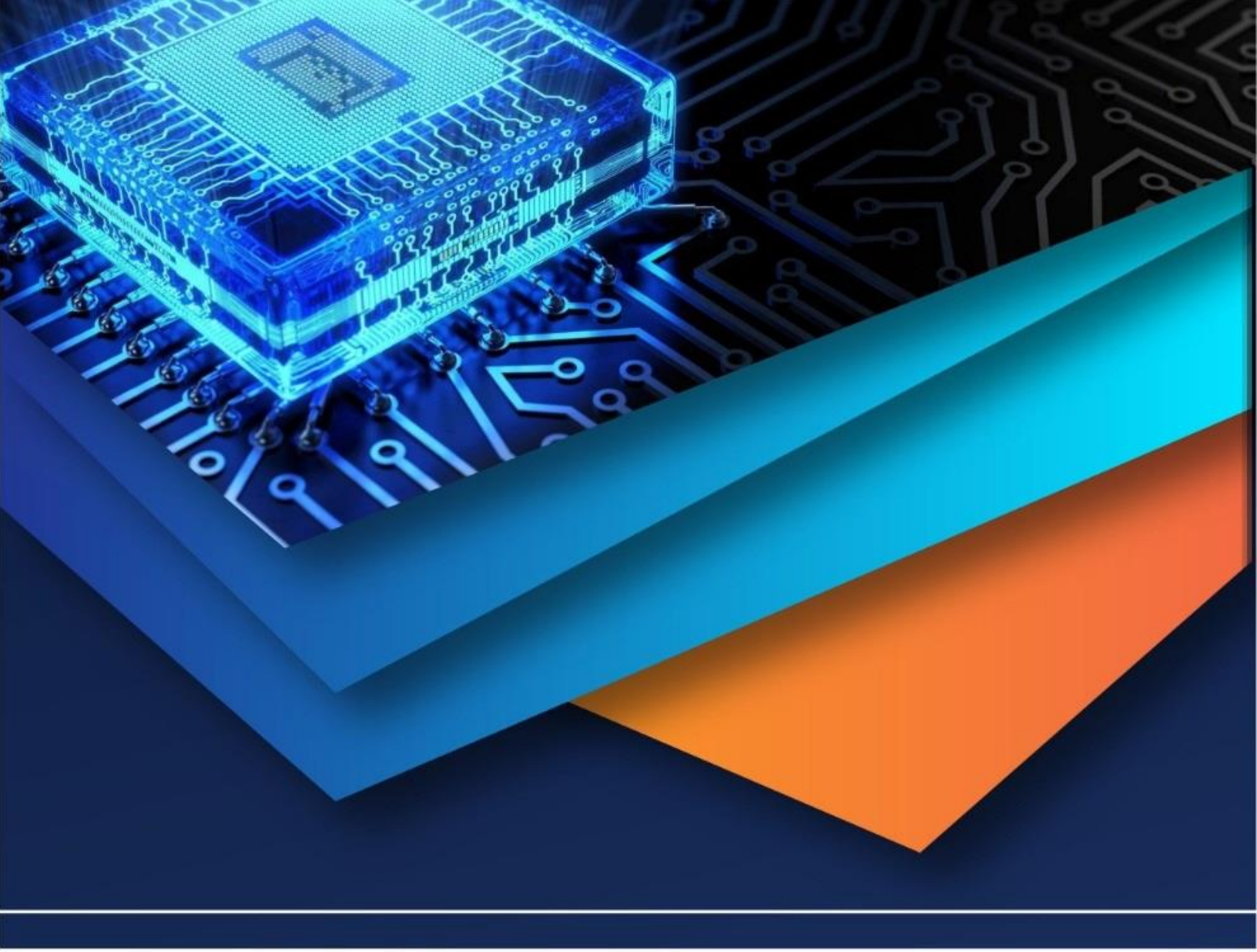

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