



LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION IN PARISH COMMUNITIES: EVIDENCE FROM CATHOLIC PRIESTS IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF MOMBASA, KENYA

Margaret N. Mutiso

Tangaza University

Daniel M. Kitonga

Tangaza University

Shem Mwalw'a

Tangaza University

Email: maggymutisoofficial@gmail.com

Abstract

Catholic priests increasingly perform responsibilities that extend beyond sacramental and pastoral ministry to include financial management, strategic planning, human resource oversight, programme coordination, conflict resolution, community mobilization and management of parish resources. This study examined the relationship between leadership development and social transformation in parishes led by Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Mombasa, Kenya. The study adopted a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The target population comprised 185 respondents, consisting of 185 priests, while 154 valid questionnaire responses were obtained, representing an overall response rate of 83.24%. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis, while qualitative data were analysed thematically. Respondents reported that leadership skills positively influenced the communities they served ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.74$), improved engagement with social issues ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.85$), enhanced conflict management ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.86$), and strengthened the ability to contribute to social transformation ($M = 3.79$, $SD = 0.78$). Pearson correlation analysis established a strong positive relationship between leadership development strategies and social transformation ($r = .805$, $(p < .001)$). The findings suggest that leadership development is relevant to the effective execution of the managerial and social responsibilities of Catholic priests. The study highlights the importance of integrating leadership, administrative, and pastoral competencies within continuing priestly formation. The study recommends that seminaries and the Archdiocesan formation office strengthen continuing formation programmes by incorporating structured leadership, administrative, and pastoral development tailored to the contemporary responsibilities of priests. The study contributes to existing knowledge by providing empirical evidence on the relationship between priestly leadership development and social transformation

within the Catholic Church context in Kenya, thereby extending the application of leadership development perspectives to ecclesial and community settings.

Keywords: leadership development, mixed methods, Kenya, leadership and social responsibilities, Catholic priests, social transformation, pastoral leadership, Archdiocese of Mombasa

INTRODUCTION

Background

Leadership development has become increasingly important in organizations operating in complex and changing environments (Lundqvist et al., 2023). Leadership responsibilities require more than technical knowledge because leaders are expected to mobilize people, make decisions, manage resources, communicate effectively, resolve conflicts and respond to emerging organizational and social needs. In religious organizations, these responsibilities are particularly important because leaders simultaneously perform spiritual, pastoral, administrative and community-development functions.

The Catholic priesthood illustrates this intersection between spiritual leadership and organizational management. In addition to sacramental and pastoral duties, priests may be responsible for budgeting, financial stewardship, human resource supervision, strategic planning, programme coordination, parish administration and conflict resolution. The study defines managerial roles in this context as administrative and leadership responsibilities extending beyond spiritual duties to include financial management, human-resource oversight, strategic planning, programme coordination and conflict resolution.

The Archdiocese of Mombasa operates within a context in which priests are expected to respond to increasingly complex social and organisational needs. Social transformation refers to a process of positive and sustained change in social relationships, structures, institutions and community conditions that promotes greater participation, justice, empowerment and human well-being (Moulaert et al., 2017; Avelino et al., 2019). In the context of the Catholic Church, this involves leadership that enables parish communities to participate in decision-making, address social justice concerns, resolve conflicts, empower lay leaders, manage parish development projects and improve pastoral services. These dimensions constitute important elements of social transformation within the study.

Relationship between Leadership Development and Social Transformation

There is empirical evidence showing that leadership development may be an activity that results in impacts going beyond personal leadership skills to include impacts in the community and organisations. According to Ryan, Myers, and Mooney (2021), when studying a leadership development intervention, the authors found that participants felt that the intervention helped in developing the ability to contribute positively to the communities and to society in general. However, the results of this study does not mean that leadership development results in automatic social change since there are other factors such as structures and institutions that might prevent that transformation from occurring. Likewise, in qualitative research on community leaders by Medellin et al. (2021), the researchers found that leadership development helped participants develop knowledge about themselves, their communities, organisations and wider systems. In another study, Hopkins et al. (2022) showed that leadership development together with peer coaching impacted individual, collective and organisational actions of leaders in human-service organisations.

Evidence drawn specifically from clergy and religious leaders also shows the importance of leadership and management development among religious organizations. Kime (2022) analyzed the issue of leadership learning and training of Roman Catholic priests and established the need for more preparation of leaders on the issues of leadership, administration, and management. This research work is relevant to the current research since Roman Catholic priests work in an institutional setting whereby pastoral duties are coupled with administrative and organizational ones.

Studies from Africa and Kenya further corroborate the significance of preparing leaders with competencies in order to serve as effective church leaders. The study by Chatira and Mwenje (2018) that examined the pastor preparation programmes in Zimbabwe noted that pastors had problems of management due to the fact that training focused more on spiritual competencies. Training was suggested to integrate managerial competencies such as strategic planning, financial management, conflict

resolution, and organisational development in pastoral preparation. Also, a study carried out in Kenya concerning church leaders has indicated that institutions offering theological and pastoral training need to enhance their capacity in terms of preparing leaders with transformative leadership skills and new societal trends (Kagama, 2024). In addition, Munyao (2021) discovered the correlation between strategic leadership and organisational performance when investigating theological training institutions in Kenya. The above results indicate that there is a need to train leaders in various competencies in African religious organisations, but there is no indication whether training Catholic priests enhances social transformation.

It can be noted that the selected studies expose some gaps. First of all, there is a gap of context because most of the studies are based on the empirical research of secular organizations, general leadership in churches, the leadership of Protestant pastors or theology institutions; no study links leadership development to social transformation among Catholic priests in coastal Kenya/Mombasa or, specifically, the Archdiocese of Mombasa. Secondly, there is a gap of methodology because some studies use qualitative methodologies or leadership and organizational performance evaluation, and very few studies measure quantitatively the connection between some leadership development dimensions and social transformation. Lastly, there is an empirical gap because there is not enough information about the extent to which some leadership development practices, such as leadership development training, leadership development approach, and necessity of leadership development, are connected with social transformation. This study is intended to fill those gaps with empirical research on the connection between leadership development and social transformation among Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Mombasa. The present article therefore specifically examines the relationship between leadership development and the effective execution of managerial responsibilities in enhancing social transformation among priests in the Catholic Archdiocese of Mombasa.

Problem Statement

In essence, priests need to be prepared sufficiently to undertake effective leadership as well as efficient administration of parishes and churches. The competencies that a priest should have include the ability to coordinate programmes, supervise, manage finance and resources, resolve conflicts, mobilise communities, and undertake social development initiatives. Unfortunately, there is evidence of inadequate preparation of priests in terms of the aspects of administration and management of their ministerial functions. Kime (2022) identified gaps in the preparation of priests for leadership and management roles, whereas a study conducted among 223 Catholic priests in Nairobi Diocese in Kenya revealed that mentoring was positively correlated with priestly performance. Inadequate leadership capacity may therefore affect the proper management of parishes and participation in social transformation by the church. Even

though other studies have been done, there is lack of empirical data on how certain aspects of leadership development impact on social transformation by Catholic priests.

Objective

The article addressed the following objective:

To examine the relationship between leadership development and social transformation in parishes served by Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Mombasa.

H01: There is no statistically significant relationship between leadership development and social transformation in parishes served by Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Mombasa

Theoretical Perspective

The article is informed principally by Transformational Leadership Theory, supported by Servant Leadership Theory, and Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory.

Transformational Leadership Theory was first developed by James MacGregor Burns in 1978 in his book entitled *Leadership*. The theory describes transforming leadership as a process whereby leaders and followers mutually affect each other such that they attain high levels of motivation, morality and collective mission. The theory was later refined by Bernard M. Bass in 1985 to what is referred to as the modern-day Transformational Leadership Theory emphasizing the power of leaders to motivate their followers to go beyond selfish interests and strive for excellence and higher collective goals. Leadership behaviors that are inspirational, motivational, intellectually stimulating and individualized to followers are considered in the theory. In relation to Catholic priestly leadership, Transformational Leadership Theory is relevant because priests are supposed to inspire the people, get them involved, mobilize communities and get responses to social and community problems.

The Servant Leadership Theory was introduced by Robert K. Greenleaf in 1970 through an essay entitled "The Servant as Leader". Greenleaf suggests that leadership begins when one feels a need to serve people as opposed to the need to lead them. The key aspects of the Servant Leadership include listening, empathy, stewardship, commitment to personal growth of others, empowerment and care for people and the community as a whole. The Servant Leadership Theory is especially applicable in the context of Catholic priestly leadership as priestly work essentially revolves around serving people and includes pastoral work, accompaniment, empowerment and service to the parish. In the context of the current research, this theory can be used to understand how to lead by serving, collaborate with lay leaders, participate in the community life and respond to the needs of society.

Transformative Learning Theory was created by Jack Mezirow as early as 1978 due to his investigations into adult learning and perspective transformation. According to Mezirow, adults may change their existing frames of reference as a result of critical examination of the previously adopted assumptions,

reflection, and exposure to new experiences and perspectives. Mezirow further developed the theory based on his research of adult learning and transformative change. In regard to the present study, Transformative Learning Theory offers an explanation of the effect of leadership formation on the way Catholic priests view and fulfill their duties theories (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985; Greenleaf, 1970; Mezirow, 1978). As a result of receiving leadership training, reflecting, gaining practical experience, and being exposed to new ways of managing parishes, priests may have new perspectives concerning pastoral care, interaction with parishioners, resolving conflicts, and collaboration with laity leaders.

METHODS

Research Design

The sequential explanatory mixed methods research design was used whereby quantitative data was gathered first before proceeding to gather qualitative data for providing explanations and context of the quantitative findings. Quantitative phase gathered information on the relationship between leadership development factors and social transformation of Catholic priests while qualitative phase gathered data on experiences and perspectives of priests in regard to leadership development and its role in social transformation. As Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) state, a sequential explanatory mixed methods research design entails gathering and analyzing quantitative data first and then going ahead to collect qualitative data that explains and elaborates the findings obtained from quantitative data analysis. In this case, integration was done during the stage of interpretation of data where the qualitative data findings were used to compare and explain the quantitative findings for each of the study variables. Therefore, the two types of data were combined to offer an informed perspective about the relationship between leadership development and social transformation.

Study Population and Sample

The target population of the quantitative study involved 185 Catholic priests of the Archdiocese of Mombasa. A census design was used since the research intended to gather information from the entire population available, thus giving an opportunity to all eligible priests in the specified population to participate in the quantitative study.

In the qualitative study, purposive sampling was used in order to identify the participants whose experiences would provide rich and relevant information concerning the topic. The participants of the study were chosen on the basis of their experience and involvement in the work of Catholic priests. The eligibility criteria included Catholic priests ordained in or working in the Archdiocese of Mombasa, actively involved in the work of a parish or any other form of pastoral ministry during the research process, and agreeing to be part of the research. In cases where applicable, diocesan as well as religious priests working in the Archdiocese were eligible.

Qualitative interviews were conducted until saturation was achieved, which meant the stage when further interviews were not yielding any new insights or information with regard to the research aims. In total, 154 priests were interviewed qualitatively, while 68 parish priests took part in the interviews. Qualitative findings were then combined with quantitative findings in the analysis phase to get an even better insight into the findings of the research. Out of the 185 questionnaires distributed, 154 (83.24%) were completed and returned.

Data Collection

Data collection involved the use of quantitative survey questions through a structured self-administered questionnaire containing closed-ended Likert-scale questions. The Likert-scale questions were measured using the five-point Likert scale, where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. There were ten questions measuring leadership development and ten questions measuring social transformation. This questionnaire was developed using the study objectives and relevant literature, and it was customized for the study population of Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Mombasa. Leadership development was measured using ten questions measuring the study dimensions of leadership development training, leadership development approaches, and necessity for leadership development. For inferential analysis, composite scores were calculated using the mean of the ten questions for each variable. Therefore, the leadership development composite score was obtained by calculating the mean of ten leadership development questions, while the social transformation composite score was obtained from the mean of ten social transformation questions. Qualitative data were collected using semi-structured interviews involving the Archbishop and priests. The interviews explored participants' experiences with leadership development, its influence on their social and managerial responsibilities, and their perceptions of changing leadership demands.

Validity and Reliability

The data collection tools were pre-tested and piloted on Catholic priests from Tangaza University, Nairobi, who did not take part in the main study. The purpose of the pilot study was to examine the clarity, relevance, comprehensibility, and appropriateness of the questionnaire items and interview questions in the context of priestly ministry. In total, 18 priests took part in the pilot study. Information gathered during the pilot led to minor changes in some items of both the questionnaire and interview, including wording, order and clarity of some items, and confusing or duplicative items were edited for clarity. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .907 for 20 items was calculated for the pilot questionnaire, exceeding the minimum requirement of .70.

Content and face validity of the instruments were established through expert evaluation. The questionnaire and interview guide were evaluated by research supervisors and other specialists in leadership development, research methodology and pastoral ministry

to find out whether the items reflected the research constructs and goals properly. Their recommendations were taken into account before the administration of the instruments in the main study.

In regard to the qualitative part of the research, the validity of results was secured through credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability. The credibility was achieved through the process of prolonged engagement with the participants, probing in the process of interviews and member checking in which participants had an opportunity to confirm or clarify the interpretations of their responses. The dependability of the research was secured through having a complete account of the data collection and analysis processes. The confirmability was assured through the process of audit trail that included the documentation of interviewing process, coding, emergence of themes and analyses.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 24. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were used to summarize respondents' perceptions. Pearson correlation analysis was employed to establish the relationship between leadership development and social transformation. Before conducting the inferential analyses, the relevant statistical assumptions were assessed. The normality assumption was assessed by examining the distribution of the residuals obtained from the multiple regression model. Normality was evaluated using the Shapiro-Wilk test and visual inspection of the histogram and normal probability (Q-Q) plot of the standardized residuals. For the Shapiro-Wilk test, a significance value greater than .05 indicates that there is insufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis of normality. The visual assessment was also considered when evaluating whether the residuals approximated a normal distribution. The normality of the dependent variable was not treated as a prerequisite for conducting multiple regression.

Table 2: Test for Normality

	Tests of Normality					
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Standardized Residual	.346	154	.000	.735	154	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The normality of the standardized residuals generated by the multiple regression analysis was determined using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test for normality with Lilliefors significance correction and the Shapiro-Wilk test. The values obtained by the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test were .346 ($p < .001$), while those of the Shapiro-Wilk test were .735 ($p < .001$). The rejection of the null hypothesis was based on the findings that the p-values obtained by the two tests were less than the .05 significance level, indicating a statistically significant deviation from normality. There was no normal distribution of the residuals. This could have an impact on the significance tests. The results need to be taken with caution, and the p-values are approximate only. It was, therefore, concluded that the null hypothesis of normally distributed residuals was rejected. It was deemed necessary to use a histogram and a normal probability (Q-Q) plot to determine the degree of deviation. The evaluation involved the regression residuals and not the dependent variable because the dependent variable is not required to be normally distributed in multiple regression.

The interviews' qualitative data were transcribed word-for-word and then subjected to thematic analysis according to the six-stage procedure suggested by Braun & Clarke (2006). The process included: (i) becoming familiar with the interview transcripts through multiple readings; (ii) identifying initial codes from meaningful parts of the data; (iii) identifying possible themes from the identified codes; (iv) reviewing the themes against the codes and the whole dataset; (v) defining and labelling the final themes; and (vi) writing the final narrative by interpreting the themes in light of the research questions. Based on the research questions and theoretical constructs; however, any new concept that emerged from the participants' narratives was considered through induction.

In order to ensure confidentiality of the participants, an individual identification code was provided for each of the participants in the interviews. These codes included C041, C028 and C015, among others, which were randomly allocated at the time of transcribing and were consistently used during the coding and analysis process. The identity of the participants such as their names and positions were not included in the transcription of the interviews as well as in the reporting of the findings. The transcribed and coded interviews were analyzed in order to determine any commonalities and disparities in the perceptions of the participants regarding leadership development and social change. The qualitative findings were then compared with the quantitative findings during the integration phase of the research.

Ethical Considerations

Voluntary participation and informed consent were ensured in the study. The principle of confidentiality and anonymity was upheld throughout the research process. Participation was voluntary, and the participants were made aware of the purpose and process of the study; they were also able to withdraw at any time. Ethical clearance for the study was granted by the Tangaza University Institutional Scientific and Ethics Committee under ethical clearance reference number TU/ISERC2025/01/00129. Subsequently, research clearance was granted by the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) under research permit number 863196. Authorization for the study was further granted by the relevant authorities in the Archdiocese of Mombasa.

RESULTS

Descriptive Findings

The findings demonstrated generally positive perceptions concerning the contribution of leadership development to social transformation, with the reported mean scores ranging from 3.79 to 4.31, with scores of 3.41–4.20 being interpreted as agreement/high perception and scores above 4.20 as strong agreement/very high perception based on the study's mean-score interpretation criteria.

The highest-rated statement was that leadership skills had positively impacted the community served by priests ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.74$). This was followed by the perception that leadership training enabled priests to better manage and resolve conflicts within the community ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.86$).

Respondents also reported that leadership training improved engagement with social issues ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.85$) and that social transformation in the community was associated with well-developed leadership among priests ($M = 3.99$, $SD = 0.97$).

The perception that there was a direct link between leadership development and social change in the parish recorded a mean of 3.89 ($SD = 0.86$). Respondents also agreed that leadership development improved advocacy for social justice ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 0.89$), application of leadership principles to community needs ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 0.92$), and community mobilization for social initiatives ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 1.01$).

Table 1.1: Respondents' Perceptions of Leadership Development and Social Transformation (N = 154)

(The study used a five-point Likert scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree).

Indicator	Mean	SD
Leadership skills positively impacted the community served	4.31	0.74
Leadership training improved conflict management	4.05	0.86
Leadership training improved engagement with social issues	4.00	0.85
Social transformation resulted from well-developed leadership	3.99	0.97
Direct link between leadership development and social change	3.89	0.86
Leadership training supported community needs	3.86	0.92
Leadership development improved social justice advocacy	3.84	0.89
Leadership training supported community mobilization	3.80	1.01
Leadership training enhanced contribution to social transformation	3.79	0.78
Composite mean	3.94	

The findings in Table 1.1 indicate that respondents generally agreed that leadership development training prepared them for their pastoral duties. Item 8, which assessed whether the leadership development programme met respondents' expectations, recorded the highest mean score ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 0.98$), followed by Item 1, which assessed whether the training adequately prepared priests for their pastoral duties ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 1.03$). These quantitative findings are reflected in the qualitative responses. Participant C012 stated, "During seminary, you study theology and principles of pastorship; however, when coming to the parish, you understand that it is a more practical issue. The training taught me how to manage people rather than perform sacramental duties." Similarly, Participant C028 observed,

"Through leadership training, I learned about the reality of parish management. You need to deal with finance, groups, conflicts and expectations of other people. Without such preparation, it would be impossible."

These quotations describe participants' experiences of leadership training in relation to the practical responsibilities of pastoral ministry.

Regarding the relevance of training content and the competence of trainers, Item 4, which assessed whether leadership training covered a wide range of relevant topics, recorded a mean score of 3.93 ($SD = 0.92$), while Item 6, which assessed the knowledge and experience of trainers, recorded a mean score of 4.03 ($SD = 1.02$). Item 5, which assessed whether the training provided practical skills applicable to real-life situations, recorded a mean of 3.98 ($SD = 0.92$), indicating a neutral position that tended towards agreement. In the qualitative findings, Participant

C028 explained the practical demands of parish management, stating, "Through leadership training, I learned about the reality of parish management. You need to deal with finance, groups, conflicts and expectations of other people. Without such preparation, it would be impossible." Participant C041 further observed,

"You get real insights into leadership once you find yourself leading a parish. There you gain experience in patience, decision-making and dealing with various personalities."

These accounts describe the practical responsibilities associated with parish leadership and the role of pastoral experience in developing leadership skills.

On the frequency and continuity of leadership development training, Item 2, which assessed whether training sessions were frequent and regular, recorded a mean of 3.85 ($SD = 0.91$). Item 10, which assessed whether continuous leadership training was necessary for respondents' roles, recorded a mean of 3.91 ($SD = 0.87$), while Item 7, which assessed access to sufficient training resources, recorded a mean of 3.75 ($SD = 0.85$). The qualitative findings identified mentorship as another aspect of leadership development. Participant C055 stated,

"Being mentored by an experienced priest makes all the difference. It helps you manage various situations that cannot be learned in formal training sessions."

This quotation describes the participant's experience of learning from experienced priests beyond formal training sessions. In addition, Item 3, which assessed confidence in leadership abilities resulting from the training provided, recorded a mean of 3.86 ($SD = 0.77$).

The integration of spiritual and administrative leadership, assessed under Item 9, recorded the lowest mean score among the ten statements ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 0.86$). Qualitative responses described the administrative responsibilities associated with pastoral ministry. Participant C012 explained, "The training taught me how to manage people rather than perform sacramental duties." Similarly, Participant C028 stated,

"You need to deal with finance, groups, conflicts and expectations of other people. Without such preparation, it would be impossible."

These quotations identify people management, financial management and conflict resolution as practical aspects of parish leadership. However, the interview responses do not directly establish the extent to which spiritual and administrative leadership were integrated into the formal training programme.

Regarding communication and participatory decision-making, Participant C067 stated,

"I used to make decisions alone before training; now I engage others in making decisions. I also became better and more confident communicator with the parish members."

This quotation describes the participant's perceived experience of communication and decision-making following leadership development training. In the quantitative findings, Item 1 recorded a mean of 4.04 (SD = 1.03), while Item 3 recorded a mean of 3.86 (SD = 0.77). The interview response provides a specific account of the participant's experience of involving others in decisions and communicating with parish members.

The quantitative findings showed that respondents generally agreed with the statements concerning leadership development training, although the mean scores varied across the ten items. The qualitative findings provided specific accounts of practical preparation, pastoral experience, mentorship, administrative responsibilities, communication and participatory decision-making. The integrated findings therefore report both the descriptive ratings of leadership development training and the experiences expressed by the interviewed participants among Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Mombasa.

Correlation between Leadership Development and Social Transformation

Pearson correlation analysis revealed a strong, positive and statistically significant relationship between leadership development and social transformation, ($r = .805$), ($p < .001$). Based on Cohen's (1988) criteria, the correlation coefficient ($r = .615$) indicates a strong positive relationship, suggesting that higher levels of leadership development were associated with higher levels of social transformation among Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Mombasa.

Because the reported p-value was below the .05 significance level, the relationship was statistically significant. The positive coefficient indicates that higher reported levels of leadership development were associated with higher reported levels of social transformation.

The finding therefore provides quantitative evidence supporting the existence of a relationship between leadership development and social transformation among priests in the Archdiocese of Mombasa. The null hypothesis H01: There is no statistically significant relationship between leadership development and social transformation in parishes served by Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Mombasa, was rejected.

DISCUSSION

There was a statistically significant, strong positive relationship between leadership development and social transformation among Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Mombasa, ($r = .805$), ($p < .001$). The implication here is that there was a positive relationship between higher levels of leadership development and social transformation among the Catholic priests. The finding is supported by empirical studies indicating that leadership development increases leaders' capability to work with other people, to deal with challenges, and coordinate activities.

The finding is in agreement with Ryan et al. (2021), which showed that leadership development enhances leadership capability and participants' ability to interact more with their environment. This is because leadership development is a pragmatic process whereby leaders develop competencies such as communication, interpersonal skills, problem-solving skills, and coordination skills. In this case, these competencies were seen among the Catholic priests through their ability to organize groups within the parishes, engaging with social issues and mobilizing the community. It should be noted, however, that the current study focused on Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Mombasa, Kenya while the above-mentioned study did not consider a specific setting.

The result is also consistent with the research conducted by Medellín et al. (2021), where leadership development was associated with improved leadership skills and community-centered outcomes. The similarity could be explained by the importance of leadership development for making leaders transition from individual approaches to leadership to collaborative approaches involving other stakeholders. Such an explanation can be based on the results obtained in the current research qualitatively, where the increased cooperation with lay leaders and community organizations as a result of leadership development was noted. It is, however, noteworthy that the current context differs from that of the aforementioned research.

The evidence from Kenya adds another dimension to support the current findings. There is a positive correlation between mentoring as a management development approach and the performance of Catholic priests in Nairobi according to Kinanga and Gichane. The coincidence in the findings of both studies could be a result of the need for ongoing development in order to enhance the leadership capacity of priests. However, the results of the studies are different. While Kinanga and Gichane studied mentoring and the performance of priests, the present study looks at social transformation and the broad issue of leadership development including training and leadership approaches and necessity thereof.

Similarly, the results are also supported by Kime (2022) who observed the inadequacies in preparing Roman Catholic priests for leadership, administration, and management roles. While Kime stressed the need for improvement in preparation, the current study shows quantitative support for the association between leadership development and social transformation. The difference in focus may be attributed to the focus of the outcomes: preparation for leadership and management in the study of Kime and perceived social transformation in the current study. The two studies seem to show the significance of leadership development as an area of consideration in the continued formation of Catholic priests.

Qualitative results give further empirical explanation of the quantitative relationship found in the research. The participants explained leadership development as a means of changing perceptions about priestly duties, increasing

capabilities to mobilize parish groups, and working together with lay leadership in the community. One participant claimed that leadership development training helped him understand that the Church should act in response to issues such as unemployment and family problems, while another participant noted that the training improved his ability to organize parish groups in order to participate in community activities.

Another significant result of the research is conflict management. With the average score of 4.05 (SD = 0.86), there is a high agreement that training in leadership improved the ability of priests to manage conflicts. This finding is especially relevant for the Kenyan Catholic environment, as parish is a place where people and groups with different needs and interests come together. Also, it is related to the qualitative results that stressed communication, cooperation, and working with various stakeholders within the parish. In this way, conflict management can be regarded as one of the practical fields of leadership development, which can help priests with their pastoral duties.

Another finding from the research shows that the training in leadership may broaden the view on the priestly position. This finding is related to the qualitative results in the interviews of participants when they described how priests went beyond the religious role and became more active in addressing various problems in society, such as unemployment, families, community initiatives, etc. However, it should be noted that this finding comes from the interviews and interpretations of the respondents.

The present result can also be understood in light of the fact that correlation does not imply causation. Even though leadership development had a significant relationship with social transformation, there could be other determinants which are responsible for the variations in the level of social transformation between priests. It is evident from the regression analysis that the three leadership-development variables altogether accounted for 38.1% of the variation in social transformation ($R^2 = .381$). This implies that 61.9% of the variation remains unexplained by the variables.

The findings of the study offer a basis for thinking about the possible inclusion of competencies of leaders into the process of continuing formation of priests. Empirical data gathered during this research can be used to present competencies of leaders that relate to community mobilization, collaboration, engagement and conflict management, since these competencies were measured during the research and were also discussed in the qualitative findings. However, other competencies, such as financial management, human-resource management and strategic planning, cannot be presented as results of this research, because they have not been measured.

CONCLUSION

The study established a positive relationship between leadership development and social transformation among Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Mombasa. Findings demonstrated that priests perceived leadership

development as contributing to community mobilization, conflict management, collaboration, social engagement and responsiveness to community needs.

The findings indicate that priests operate in a leadership environment that requires both spiritual and managerial competencies. Leadership development can therefore provide an important bridge between priestly formation and the practical responsibilities associated with parish administration and social transformation.

The study does not suggest that leadership development operates independently of other factors. Resources, institutional structures, community participation and the wider social context remain important considerations. Nevertheless, the findings provide empirical support for strengthening leadership development within priestly formation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings have recommendations for seminaries, the Archdiocese of Mombasa, the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB), and Catholic priests. The recommendations that follow are distinguished according to whether they are directly supported by the empirical findings or arise as broader suggestions for strengthening priestly leadership development.

Recommendations for Seminaries

The seminaries should emphasize leadership development in the process of priestly formation. The reason for this is the positive correlation between leadership development and social transformation, ($r = .805$), ($p < .001$). There was a high level of agreement on the role of leadership training in developing conflict management ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.86$) and community-related responsibilities in the quantitatively obtained findings. Therefore, the seminaries should focus more on conflict resolution and mediation, communications skills, community mobilization, social engagement and collaborative leadership. These topics are directly evidence-based as they appeared as the indicators of the study and in its qualitative findings.

Practical experience of leadership, mentoring and reflective learning should also be offered by seminaries. The reason for this is in the qualitative findings, where participants related the concept of leadership development to changes in the way they structured the groups in parishes, engaged lay leaders and addressed social issues.

Recommendations for the Archdiocese of Mombasa

There is need to enhance formation among the priests within Mombasa Archdiocese regarding mobilization of the community, management of conflict, working together with lay people, and engaging in social issues. This recommendation is justified by the results of the study, where the best ranking indicator was leadership development as an influence to the community ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.74$), and training in leadership as far as conflict management ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.86$), social issues ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.85$), and community mobilization ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 1.01$) are concerned.

The archdiocese should therefore consider holding regular training sessions on leadership, mentorship programs, and forums to exchange experiences and methods of leading the parish. More emphasis should be laid on enhancing cooperation between priests and lay people.

Recommendations for the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops

In light of the evidence that leadership development was highly related to social transformation, as well as participants' statements indicating that leadership development made them capable of engaging with communities and dealing with social issues, KCCB might consider developing common guidelines for the continuing formation of the leadership of Catholic priests, but leaving individual dioceses flexibility in adapting the programme to their situations.

At the national level, KCCB can coordinate and support the development of leadership formation programmes that include training in all the areas directly covered by this research, especially community mobilization, conflict management, social engagement, communication skills, participation in decision-making and cooperation with lay leadership.

This study did not attempt to examine the knowledge, skills and competencies in financial management, human resource management, strategic planning and project management. As such, these areas cannot be discussed as the results of this research. Nevertheless, KCCB can take into account the need to develop such areas for future leadership formation in consideration of the wide administrative role of priests and existing literature on organizational leadership.

Recommendations for Catholic Priests

Catholic priests should utilize their leadership competencies in their roles within their respective parishes and communities. This recommendation is supported directly from the results of the study because the qualitative data revealed that leadership competency development was linked to effective parish group organization, community mobilization, collaboration with lay leaders, and response to social problems.

In light of this, priests should look for ways to engage in continuous learning, mentorship, reflection, conflict management development, community participation, and collaborative leadership. From the qualitative data, it is evident that besides being trained in terms of leadership competencies, Catholic priests can develop such competencies practically while undertaking parish ministry roles.

Evidence Base for the Recommendations

The recommendations identified within this research may be classified based on their level of evidentiary support. The recommendations relating to conflict management, community mobilization, social involvement, communication, collaboration with lay leadership and participatory processes have direct evidential support in that they appeared either in the quantitative or qualitative

results obtained through this research. Recommendations pertaining to financial/resource management, strategic/operational planning, human resource management and project management did not appear in the research data and are more generalized in nature.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The study was conducted within the Archdiocese of Mombasa and focused on Catholic priests. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted within this institutional and geographical context.

The quantitative component was also based largely on self-reported perceptions. Other limitations include the cross-sectional design, which prevents causal inference; possible social-desirability bias, since priests rated their own leadership impact; common-method variance (same respondents supplied both variables); and the absence of parishioners' or lay leaders' perspectives. Future research could complement self-reported data with objective indicators of parish performance, community participation, project completion, financial management and service delivery.

Further comparative research involving several Catholic dioceses in Kenya could establish whether the patterns observed in Mombasa are also evident in other ecclesiastical contexts.

REFERENCES

- Avelino, F., Wittmayer, J. M., Pel, B., Weaver, P., Dumitru, A., Haxeltine, A., Kemp, R., Jørgensen, M. S., Bauler, T., Ruijsink, S., & O'Riordan, T. (2019). Transformative social innovation and (dis)empowerment. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 145, 195–206. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2017.05.002>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a>
- Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. Harper & Row.
- Bass, B. M. (1985). *Leadership and performance beyond expectations*. Free Press.
- Chatira, F., & Mwenje, J. (2018). The development of management skills for effective church management in pastoral preparation programs in Zimbabwe. *African Journal of Business Management*, 12(5), 103–120. <https://doi.org/10.5897/AJBM2018.8500>
- Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd ed.). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203771587>
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Greenleaf, R. K. (1970). *The servant as leader*. Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership.
- Hopkins, K., Meyer, M., Afkinich, J., Bialobrzeski, E., & Perry, V. (2022). Impact of leadership development and facilitated peer coaching on women's individual, collective, and organizational behaviors in human services. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 32(3), 387–408. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nml.21487>

- Kagama, D. N. (2024). Developing church leaders in Kenya for transformative leadership: Lessons from the Covid-19 pandemic. *Journal of Pastoral and Practical Theology*, 3(1), 15–23. <https://doi.org/10.51317/jppt.v3i1.597>
- Kime, B. M. (2022). Roman Catholic priests: The need for leadership and management training [Doctoral dissertation, Robert Morris University].
- Lundqvist, D., Wallo, A., Coetzer, A., & Kock, H. (2023). Leadership and learning at work: A systematic literature review of learning-oriented leadership. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 30(2), 139–162. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15480518221133970>
- Medellin, P. J., Speer, P. W., Christens, B. D., & Gupta, J. (2021). Transformation to leadership: Learning about self, the community, the organization, and the system. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 49(8), 3122–3140. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22236>
- Mezirow, J. (2018). Transformative learning theory. In K. Illeris (Ed.), *Contemporary theories of learning: Learning theorists in their own words* (2nd ed., pp. 114–128). Routledge.
- Mezirow, J. (1978). Perspective transformation. *Adult education*, 28(2), 100-110.
- Moulaert, F., Mehmood, A., MacCallum, D., & Leubolt, B. (Eds.). (2017). *Social innovation as a trigger for transformations: The role of research*. Publications Office of the European Union. <https://doi.org/10.2777/68949>
- Munyao, S. M. (2021). Effects of strategic leadership on the performance of Africa Inland Church theological training institutions in Kenya. *International Journal of Research Publications*, 77(1), 9–17. <https://doi.org/10.47119/IJRP100771520211932>
- Ryan, I., Myers, B., & Mooney, S. (2021). Leader development: A pathway for social change? *Leadership*, 17(3), 296–317. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1742715020980295>