



PERCEIVED REASONS FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND PERCEIVED SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION AMONG CATHOLIC PRIESTS IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF MOMBASA, KENYA

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to examine the factors necessitating leadership development and social transformation among Catholic priests of the Archdiocese of Mombasa, Kenya. This study was informed by Transformative Learning Theory. The study used a mixed methods research design. A census sampling procedure was used and the respondents were limited to 185. The data collection technique included interview guides and questionnaires. To establish reliability, the study used Cronbach's alpha (threshold = 0.70; report the obtained α for each scale). A pilot research was conducted to check the suitability, reliability and credibility of the data collection tools. The responses to both quantitative and qualitative questions were analyzed descriptively and thematic analysis, respectively. The study found a moderate positive association between factors necessitating leadership development and social transformation of Catholic priests in the Mombasa Archdiocese. Priests thought training in leadership was useful, relevant and a good way to build up confidence, developing community, advocacy and conflict resolution skills. Correlation and multiple regression analyses were used to analyze the data to determine the relationship between the leadership development variables and social transformation of Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Mombasa. From the results of the multiple regression analysis, it was found that there is a strong positive correlation between factors necessitating leadership development and social transformation ($r = .928$), ($p < .001$), which implies that the independent variable collectively account for 38.1% of the variation in social transformation. Perceived necessity of leadership development was a significant predictor of social transformation ($\beta = 0.342$) in the regression results. The study recommends ongoing and systematic leadership development where pastoral, administrative and community skills are merged for the enhancement of the Church's social impact.

Keywords: Factors necessitating leadership development, leadership needs, Catholic priests, Kenya, social transformation, pastoral ministry, managerial leadership, Mombasa Archdiocese.

INTRODUCTION

Background

The responsibilities of Catholic priests have expanded considerably beyond sacramental ministry. Within contemporary parish environments, priests may be required to manage people, financial resources, programmes, buildings and institutions while simultaneously providing spiritual guidance and pastoral care.

This study conceptualizes social transformation as lasting and measurable changes in social, administrative and developmental activities of parish communities resulting from effective leadership and management. These changes include community participation in decision-making, social justice advocacy, conflict resolution, empowerment of lay leaders, parish resource and project management, and improved service delivery.

The expanding nature of priestly responsibilities creates a corresponding need for leadership development. Traditional theological formation provides an essential foundation for priestly ministry, but contemporary parish administration requires additional competencies. This study specifically identifies financial management, strategic planning, human-resource oversight and programme coordination as managerial responsibilities now associated with priestly ministry. Leadership development is therefore necessitated not simply by institutional expectations but also by changes in the social environment. Parish communities encounter poverty,

unemployment, family instability, social conflict, changing expectations and other complex social issues. Priests are consequently required to exercise leadership in environments characterized by uncertainty and competing demands.

Reasons Necessitating Leadership Development

Rebmann and colleagues (2023) investigated the role of digital leadership development in enhancing organizational performance within European institutions. The study found that rapid digital transformation necessitates continuous leadership development to equip leaders with competencies in digital communication, virtual collaboration, and data-driven decision-making. Leaders who underwent structured development programmes demonstrated higher adaptability and improved strategic responsiveness in dynamic environments. This study is relevant to the present research because it demonstrates that leadership development is increasingly necessitated by technological advancement and the demand for digital competence. In the context of Catholic priests, similar pressures exist as pastoral ministry increasingly incorporates digital evangelization, online administration, and virtual community engagement. However, the study is limited by its focus on corporate and institutional settings in Europe, thereby leaving a contextual gap in understanding how digital leadership needs manifest within faith-based and African ecclesial environments.

Heifetz and associates (2022) examined leadership development in the post-COVID-19 era, focusing on organizational resilience and crisis response. The study established that the unpredictability introduced by the pandemic necessitated continuous leadership development to strengthen adaptive capacity, emotional intelligence, and crisis management skills among leaders. Organizations with structured leadership development programmes were better able to sustain operations and maintain stakeholder engagement during periods of disruption. These findings highlight that leadership development is necessitated by increasing environmental uncertainty and the need for adaptive leadership capabilities. This is particularly relevant to priestly ministry, where clergy frequently respond to crises such as social instability, economic hardship, and pastoral emergencies. Nevertheless, the study was conducted within secular organizational contexts, limiting its applicability to ecclesial leadership structures and sacramental ministry environments.

The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (2023) explored the shift toward hybrid and virtual leadership formation in seminary and diocesan training programmes following the COVID-19 pandemic. The study found that modern leadership development is increasingly necessitated by the need for flexible, accessible, and continuous formation systems. Virtual training enhanced accessibility and peer learning, but also revealed challenges such as reduced mentorship, weakened relational formation, and limited experiential learning opportunities. These findings indicate that leadership

development is necessitated by changes in training delivery systems and the evolving expectations of continuous formation. In the context of Catholic priesthood, this is particularly relevant as seminaries and dioceses increasingly adopt blended formation models. However, the study is largely based on Western ecclesial contexts, limiting its generalizability to African diocesan leadership formation systems.

Bhengu (2021) examined Ubuntu leadership as a culturally grounded framework influencing leadership effectiveness in African organizations. The study found that leadership development is necessitated by the need to align leadership practices with cultural values such as communal responsibility, mutual respect, participatory decision-making, and relational accountability. Organizations that integrated Ubuntu principles experienced stronger cohesion and improved responsiveness to community needs. This study is relevant to the present research because it demonstrates that leadership development is not only driven by organizational change but also by the need for cultural alignment in leadership practice. In the Kenyan context, Catholic priests serve communities that highly value social solidarity and collective identity. However, the study remains largely conceptual and does not sufficiently examine how Ubuntu principles are systematically integrated into formal leadership development programmes.

Khoza (2022) explored indigenous African leadership philosophies and their contribution to organizational effectiveness. The study found that leadership development is necessitated by the need to incorporate indigenous knowledge systems that emphasize consensus-building, ethical leadership, and community empowerment. These approaches enhance leadership relevance, sustainability, and legitimacy within African contexts. The findings are relevant to the current study because they highlight the necessity of culturally grounded leadership development frameworks, particularly in African institutions. For Catholic priests operating in diverse communities, this underscores the importance of leadership approaches that reflect local values and social realities. However, the study does not specifically examine ecclesial leadership structures or how indigenous leadership philosophies are integrated into Church-based formation programmes.

Orobator (2021) examined leadership formation within the African Catholic Church and found that contemporary ecclesial realities necessitate broader leadership development beyond theological training. The study established that priests require competencies in social engagement, conflict resolution, ethical leadership, and community transformation to respond effectively to evolving pastoral demands. These findings directly support the argument that leadership development is necessitated by expanding ministerial roles and increasing social expectations placed on clergy. However, the study adopts a continental perspective and does not focus on structured leadership development interventions at the

diocesan level in Kenya, thereby leaving a localized empirical gap addressed by the present study.

Adaptation, communicating across difference, and systems thinking are other competencies necessary for the church leader in adapting to new societal dynamics, as research outside strictly ecclesial environments suggests (Grandy & Holton, 2013; Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1999; Aldulaimi, 2018). Furthermore, cross-organizational linkages and networks are increasingly playing a pivotal role in capacity building and social capital development for change in the global context (Bartol & Zhang, 2017). These broader findings offer a conceptual framework for rethinking the process of Catholic clergy formation in today's society.

Technological changes are also taking place, which is changing the way leaders are engaging, mobilizing, and serving communities. Digital tools have affected how we communicate, how we reach others, and how we advocate for others, making it more important than ever that leaders, including clergy, are digital fluent in their leadership practice (Avolio et al., 2021). Overall, the international findings indicate that leadership development must go beyond content delivery to adaptive, networked and context-sensitive preparation. These insights contribute to why models of priestly leadership formation that are merely inherited are no longer sufficient on a global level. (Aldulaimi, 2018; Avolio et al., 2021; Bartol & Zhang, 2017; Britannica Editors of Encyclopedia, 2022; Grandy & Holton, 2013; Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1999.)

In the socio-cultural landscape of the Church and the South generally, new realities are increasing the expectations of clergy. The public involvement of religious institutions has also been growing in response to social, political and economic complexity, as evidenced by the rapid urbanisation, resource inequalities, ecological pressures and population changes (Bartol & Zhang, 2017; Marwa & Zairi, 2018; Ofori, 2018). In communities characterized by volatility and unmet social needs, Catholic priests are increasingly playing the role of advocates, mediators and development partners (Crea & Francis, 2015; Ferrari, 2017). When spiritual authority is required in the past and applied leadership in the present, for community, a bridge must be built, a bridge of leadership development.

The literature on leadership relevant to the region also suggests the need to prepare leaders for an intercultural and interreligious context in the era of globalization (Grandy & Holton, 2013; Crea & Francis, 2015; Ferrari, 2017). Clergy are summoned to be involved in pluralistic publics, to respond to the challenges of migration, to work together across faith communities for the sake of human dignity and human justice. Demographic changes, particularly the surge of young people, need intergenerational dialogue and strategies of leadership that include youths (Ngwendo, 2012; Nwadike 2015). It is increasingly important in the Church's mission in the current environment in Africa for leadership development programs to intentionally prepare priests for social justice

advocacy, coalition building, communication across cultures and engagement with the youth.

The Archdiocese of Mombasa is a context where a combination of complex social realities and the mission of the Catholic Church play out. The ethnic conflicts, the high rate of urbanization, the economic gap and the environmental deterioration are challenges faced by the communities in the Archdiocese (Rakodi et al., 2000; County Government of Mombasa, 2023). The role of the priest is now challenged to act actively, to foster reconciliation, build community and strive for social justice. Priests can enhance the skills of communicating, cross-cultural understanding and organizational capabilities in the context of these pressing local realities through leadership development programs (Bartol & Zhang, 2017; Crea & Francis, 2015; Ferrari, 2017; Grandy & Holton, 2013).

Technological change also plays a role in ministry at the local level: Digital communications have an impact on evangelization, community mobilization, and pastoral outreach strategies (Avolio et al., 2021). At the same time, demographic changes, such as an aging population and younger demographics, present ministry opportunities and leadership challenges. Developmentally competent priests are more likely to be able to listen to youth voices, foster shared ownership and develop the lay leadership of the future to bring long-term social impact (Ngwendo, 2012; Nwadike, 2015). Other leadership research in the region also indicates that congregational leaders need to be able to communicate within networks, be able to use limited resources, and be able to form strategic partnerships with people from different congregations and sectors to tackle structural inequities (Bartol & Zhang, 2017; Megheirkouni & Mejeheirkouni, 2020; Weiss & Molinaro, 2016).

This is also a call for increased leadership capacity among Catholic priests in Kenya in keeping with the church's growing mission in the society. Human development, rights advocacy and community empowerment are becoming more and more part of Catholic institutions' activities throughout the country (Crea & Francis, 2015; Ferrari, 2017). Therefore, Clergy are expected to be change agents that connect Gospel values with action in the sphere of education, health, justice and local development (Britannica Editors of Encyclopedia, 2022; Chin, 2015; Mutembei, Rugendo, & Ciumwari, 2017). The Church's mandate to reach out and influence the modern world and to strive for human dignity was reinforced by the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) and ` to the clergy to address structural injustice (Ngwendo, 2012; Nwadike, 2015; Parise & Pierli, 2013; Britannica Editors of Encyclopedia, 2022). In the Mombasa Archdiocese, these requirements dovetail with the real sustainability of social pressure, intensifying the demand for programmatic leadership development for priests. (Bartol & Zhang, 2017; Crea & Francis, 2015; Ferrari, 2017; Mutembei et al., 2017; Ngwendo, 2012; Nwadike, 2015; Parise & Pierli, 2013.)

Even though these pieces of research shed light on the issues of priestly formation and church leadership, this study is different since it seeks to analyze the connection between the development of leadership skills and social transformation among the Catholic priests of the Archdiocese of Mombasa. Unlike Kime (2022), who analyzed leadership and management training, Kagema (2024) who looked into the problem of transformative leadership among the church leaders in Kenya, and Nyabera et al. (2023), who analyzed the priestly formation and ministry in the Diocese of Homa Bay, the current study examined the degree of leadership development, the connection between leadership development and social transformation, the need for leadership development, and ways to develop leadership skills among the Catholic priests. The research used a mixed method design and included the results of questionnaires answered by 154 participants and interviews about parish priests' experiences. The unique contribution of this study is related to the analysis of the problem of leadership development and social transformation in the Archdiocese of Mombasa.

Problem Statement

Catholic priests are increasingly expected to perform complex pastoral, administrative and social responsibilities. These responsibilities include managing financial resources, supervising people, coordinating programmes, resolving conflicts and responding to community needs.

However, there are gaps between traditional priestly formation and the managerial and leadership competencies required by contemporary parish ministry. Leadership and management courses have not been fully integrated into priestly formation, while contextual issues such as economic challenges, cultural considerations and changing community expectations complicate leadership responsibilities.

The absence of adequate empirical evidence concerning the specific factors necessitating leadership development makes it difficult for dioceses and formation institutions to design leadership-development programmes that respond to actual pastoral and managerial realities.

Objective

This article addresses the following objective:

To analyse the factors that necessitate leadership development among Catholic priests and their relationship with social transformation in the Archdiocese of Mombasa

Theoretical Perspective

The article is informed by Transformative Learning Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory as follows:

Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory

Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory was developed by Jack Mezirow in 1978 through his research on adult learning and educational change. The theory

posits that learning extends beyond the acquisition of knowledge and skills to encompass a fundamental transformation in an individual's beliefs, assumptions, values, and worldview. According to Mezirow (2018), transformative learning occurs when individuals critically examine their existing perspectives, challenge previously held assumptions, and adopt new ways of understanding themselves and the world around them. The process often begins with a "disorienting dilemma," which prompts self-reflection, critical assessment of assumptions, dialogue with others, and ultimately a transformation of meaning perspectives. The theory has since been expanded and refined by scholars such as Cranton (2016), Taylor (2007), and Dirkx (2006), who have contributed significantly to the transformative learning literature.

The theory is highly relevant to this study on the role of leadership development in enhancing social transformation among Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Mombasa, Kenya. Leadership development programmes are intended to equip priests with the competencies necessary to address emerging social, economic, and pastoral challenges within their communities. Through transformative learning, priests can critically evaluate traditional approaches to leadership, reflect on their experiences, and develop new perspectives that enable them to respond effectively to contemporary societal issues such as poverty, youth unemployment, inequality, family instability, and ethical concerns. The theory suggests that meaningful social transformation begins with personal transformation (Mezirow, 2018), making it particularly applicable to understanding how leadership development can influence the attitudes, behaviours, and leadership practices of Catholic priests.

One of the major strengths of Transformative Learning Theory is its emphasis on critical reflection, self-awareness, and lifelong learning. The theory encourages leaders to challenge existing assumptions, adapt to changing circumstances, and become innovative problem-solvers (Cranton, 2016). These attributes are essential for Catholic priests who are expected to provide leadership in increasingly complex social environments. The theory also promotes openness to change and continuous personal development, enabling priests to become more responsive to the evolving needs of their congregations and communities. Furthermore, transformative learning fosters adaptive leadership by encouraging individuals to learn from experience and develop more inclusive and participatory approaches to leadership.

Despite its strengths, Transformative Learning Theory has been the subject of extensive scholarly debate and criticism. One major criticism concerns its strong emphasis on individual cognitive transformation. Critics argue that Mezirow's framework focuses primarily on personal reflection and perspective change while paying insufficient attention to the social, cultural, and institutional contexts that influence learning. Taylor (2007) argues that transformative learning is often a collective process shaped by relationships, communities, and social structures rather than solely by individual

reflection. This limitation is particularly significant in the context of Catholic priesthood, where leadership is exercised within communities and is influenced by ecclesiastical structures, traditions, and collective values.

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational Leadership Theory is an idea conceived by James MacGregor Burns (1978), further improved upon by Bernard M. Bass (1985). This theory holds that effective leaders are able to inspire and motivate their followers to work harder and be more committed to their tasks through appeal to their values, beliefs, and motives. Four aspects are emphasized in the theory including idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Avolio & Bass, 1991). This theory is relevant to the research paper entitled investigating the role of leadership development in enhancing social transformation among Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Mombasa, Kenya because it illustrates how priests, as ethical and religious leaders, can help bring about social transformation. Catholic priests must lead by example in upholding ethics (idealized influence), paint a compelling picture with gospel values such as social justice and peace (inspirational motivation), reflect critically on issues concerning society (intellectual stimulation), and attend to the unique requirements of the people they minister to (individualized consideration). As observed by McLeod (2021), clergy serves as catalysts for transformation making the theory highly applicable to this topic.

Some of the key strengths of Transformational Leadership Theory include a focus on the importance of motivating employees, developing a vision and personal growth of individuals. According to Shaughnessy et al. (2017), transformational leadership results in high levels of involvement and commitment among followers as well as improved employee productivity. The development of skills necessary for leading social change in the form of honesty, empathy, and innovation are some other strengths of Transformational Leadership Theory (Zineldin, 2017). As far as the Catholic priesthood is concerned, these characteristics are extremely important for involving community members, promoting social justice, and overcoming socioeconomic issues.

Nevertheless, Transformational Leadership Theory has several weaknesses. First of all, it often focuses on the visions and goals of the leader rather than the needs and well-being of followers. Thus, followers' personal development might suffer from the transformation process since the leader's transformation agenda takes precedence. Another weakness of this theory is related to placing great importance on the charisma of leaders.

METHODS

Research Design

In this research study, an explanatory sequential mixed methods research design has been used where quantitative data is collected and analyzed first and then followed by qualitative data collection and analysis in order to explain and elaborate on the quantitative results. This decision was made due to the necessity to identify some patterns and relations between the process of leadership development and social change and then understand better the results of quantitative analysis. Thus, at the first stage of the research, quantitative data was gathered using the questionnaire survey and analyzed with the help of suitable statistical methods to identify the patterns, relations and trends related to leadership development and social transformation. At the second stage, qualitative data was gathered through the interview technique to find out more about the experiences and perceptions of participants concerning the quantitative findings.

The combination of the two stages allowed for providing an interpretation of and explaining the quantitative results on the basis of qualitative ones, making it possible to get a better understanding of the problem related to the connection between leadership development and social change among Catholic priests.

To enhance the process of integration of results, the current study applied the strategy of systematic triangulation. It was about the comparison and analysis of qualitative themes against the background of quantitative results to identify converging, complementary, and divergent aspects. Integration of results was performed during the stage of their interpretation to ensure that the results were not just presented separately but interpreted as a whole solution to the research problem. In other words, qualitative results were used to interpret the statistical ones and vice versa.

The population for this study consisted of 185 Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Mombasa. Considering the fairly small population size, a census technique was used such that all the priests in this population were sampled in the study. This helped to reduce sampling errors and made the results very representative of the target population. The only drawback with this technique is that it was resource-intensive in terms of data collection and analysis, but the results would be valid and reliable.

Population and Sampling

The target population was 185 Catholic priests in service within the Mombasa Archdiocese and 750,000 catholic faithful (Archdiocese of Mombasa, Kenya). The population includes all priests within the archdiocese, the Parish Chairperson, leaders of Catholic institutions, and the archbishop.

Table 4.1: Response Rate of Respondents

Sample Category	No. of Units	Actual Response	Response Rate
Priests	185	154	83.15%
Total Response	185	154	83.15%

Source: Researcher 2026

As shown in Table 4.1, the survey achieved an overall response rate of 83.15%. The Among priests, 154 out of 184 completed the questionnaires, representing a 83.15% response rate. In total, 154 out of 185 questionnaires were returned, resulting in the overall response rate of 83.15%.

The study used the census method in sampling, where all 184 Catholic priests within the Mombasa Archdiocese together with the Archbishop as a key informant were targeted. The reason for choosing the census method was the small size of the population and need for comprehensive data on leadership development practices within the archdiocese. This was considered the most appropriate way since it allowed for the capture of all perspectives from all the leadership stakeholders.

In addition to this general reasoning, the choice of a census approach also served to reduce sampling error and eliminate the possibility of some subpopulation of priests being left out of the study. As leadership development experiences may vary depending on the parish, the age group, and the role of a priest, including everyone into the research provided a much deeper insight into the phenomenon that was studied. At the same time, the efficiency of the census method depends on actual access and response rates. There may be cases when not all individuals from the target population can be reached due to reasons like travel plans, ministry obligations, health problems, or administrative duties. Taking this into consideration, the study included provisions for non-response to avoid low rates by applying methods of follow-ups, such as repeated visits and reminders, as well as convenient data collection techniques. Also, non-response bias may be an issue, meaning that non-response individuals may be different from the respondents in some systematic way.

Data Collection Instruments

For this study, data were collected using two basic research tools that is the semi-structured interview guide in the qualitative phase and the structured survey questionnaire in the quantitative phase. The tools are designed to gather detailed information on several areas relating to Mombasa Archdiocese's social changes, context, priests' leadership ability and leadership development. The structured survey questionnaire was distributed during the quantitative part of the study. It was in this format that the study used closed-ended questions with specific answer options. It took up questions such as: What kind of data priests encounter, are they engaged in leadership development programs, do they consider their leadership skills to be important, have they encountered social reform projects, and what factors influence their leadership responsibilities? The format of the questionnaire is organized which facilitates the effective collection of data and quantitative analysis of responses.

The semi-structured interview guide was used in the qualitative phase of the study. This guide contained open-ended and close-ended questions which were intended to elicit rich in-depth stories and points of view from participants. The interview guide addressed issues like the experiences of the priests' individual personal development, challenges to their leadership, their perception of social change in their communities, and suggestions for enhancing the effectiveness of their leadership and social engagement. The semi-structured approach gives researchers more flexibility for exploring and elaborating on a question to gain deeper understanding of participants' responses and gain subtle insights.

The two research instruments were meticulously crafted to conform to the research goals and gather a wide variety of data pertinent to the subject matter of the study. This study aimed at validating results, triangulating findings and giving a comprehensive picture on the complex nature of social change and leadership development of Catholic priests in the Mombasa Archdiocese, using mixed methods of quantitative and qualitative approach.

Reliability

Validity Testing for the Pre-test of the Research Instruments Among the priests at Tangaza university was done to ensure the validity of the research instruments. In order to ensure the efficiency in collecting data and getting valid results, the researcher did assessment and improved on the research instruments taking into consideration the feedback from the participants.

Validity Tests Done Before Conducting the Study Content validity of the study instruments including the questionnaires and interview guide was checked by reviewing them with specialists in the field of religious studies, social transformation, and leadership development in order to ensure the content validity. Criterion related validity was tested by comparing the results obtained from the study instruments with some external criterion like the indicators of social transformation in Mombasa Archdiocese and leadership performance criteria. External validity was also considered by selecting a representative sample from the Catholic priests in Mombasa Archdiocese.

Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient was used for the evaluation of the dependability of the questionnaire with values lying between 0 and 1. This tool is suitable considering the predominance of questions on the Likert scale. The value of Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient, which is 0.7, was used as the criterion for assessing the reliability, as suggested by Cooper and Schindler (2012). Dependability, credibility, confirmability and transferability were used as the tools for assessing the trustworthiness of the qualitative tool alongside reliability. Those items that

failed to meet the criterion of 0.70 were adjusted or removed. The study obtained a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.86 indicating that the items were reliable. The reliability was assured through the documentation of all the processes of the research and an audit trail that provided an account of the procedures used in the study.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis

The data was subjected to analysis through quantitative and qualitative techniques in order to ensure that a complete assessment of the research aims was undertaken. In order to analyze quantitative data collected through questionnaires, the data was encoded, checked for errors, and analyzed using the IBM SPSS Statistics Version 24. Frequency distributions, percentage distribution, mean, and standard deviation were employed in describing demographic information of respondents and patterns concerning leadership development and social transformation among Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Mombasa.

Further, statistical methods of inference were utilized to identify the connection that exists between the variables in the research. The first method involved the use of correlation, which helped in identifying the degree and direction of the connection between leadership development and social transformation. In addition, regression analysis was conducted whereby social transformation acted as the dependent variable, while the independent variables were the degree of leadership development training, connection between leadership development and social transformation, need for leadership development, and ways of achieving effective leadership development.

The qualitative data collected from semi-structured interviews was subjected to thematic analysis for 68 parish priests. Transcription of the audio recorded interviews was done verbatim before the data was analyzed. Recurring themes, patterns, and categories relevant to leadership development and social transformation were derived from the thematic analysis process. This analysis technique provided an insight into the experiences and perceptions of the priests concerning the role of leadership development in promoting social transformation. Emerging themes were linked to the research objectives before being incorporated with the results of the quantitative phase to give a comprehensive overview of the research problem. Through descriptive, inferential, and thematic analyses, the mixed methods design ensured that both quantitative and qualitative aspects of the study were adequately addressed.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

The study was officially approved through ethical clearance by the Tangaza University Ethics Committee Approval No: TU/ISERC2025/01/00129) on 15/10/2025. Apart from that, the study received research clearance from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) through its permit number [NACOSTI/P/26/4183315] together with ecclesiastical clearance from Catholic Archdiocese of Mombasa.

Participation in the study was wholly voluntary. Before engaging in the study, participants were made aware of what the study entailed, and consent was sought through a signed informed consent form. Participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality in order to protect them. More importantly, participants were well aware of the fact that they had the option to opt out of the study anytime without being held accountable.

RESULTS

Questionnaires were distributed to 185 respondents' priests. In all, 154 questionnaires were received back. There was a response rate of 83.15% in the study. The study had a response rate of 154 filled questionnaires out of 185 distributed which amounted to an overall response rate of 83.15%.

This research generated a response rate of 83.15% showing that a fairly significant number of the selected respondents took part in the study. This high response rate was made possible by the use of self-administered questionnaires and sufficient time for the respondents to fill the instruments along with follow-up on their participation. A high response rate increased the volume of data that could be analyzed. However, high response rate is not enough evidence to show that there was no non-response bias because of the possibility of differences between the respondents and non-respondents regarding certain attributes of the study.

3.1 Factors Necessitating Leadership Development

Reasons Necessitating Leadership Development and Social Transformation

The study aimed at analyzing the rationale behind the requirement for developing leadership among Catholic priests in the Mombasa Archdiocese regarding social change. The participants were required to rate the impact of complexity in social problems, administration, changing community needs, shifting social dynamics, and individual and organizational growth on the requirement for priests to undertake leadership development training. The analysis was also informed by how inadequacies in leadership competencies, community engagement, and the success of social and pastoral endeavors relate to leadership. Their views were then analyzed, and the findings are provided in Table 4.12 below.

Table 4.12: Reasons Necessitating Leadership Development and Social Transformation

Statement	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
Leadership development is essential due to the complex social issues facing the community.	154	1	5	4.06	0.69
Effective leadership is necessary to address the challenges within the Archdiocese.	154	1	5	3.27	0.73
There has been a noticeable gap in leadership skills among priests that needs to be addressed.	154	1	5	3.63	0.81
The community expects priests to take active leadership roles in social matters.	154	1	5	3.40	0.78
Leadership training is crucial for personal growth and professional effectiveness.	154	1	5	4.08	0.75
The changing social dynamics require priests to have strong leadership capabilities.	154	1	5	3.81	0.84
Leadership development is needed to enhance the administrative functions of priests.	154	1	5	3.73	0.74
Priests need leadership training to better support their congregations.	154	1	5	4.10	0.82
Effective leadership can lead to improved relationships within the community.	154	1	5	4.27	0.69
The success of community projects often depends on the leadership skills of priests.	154	1	5	4.21	0.71
Valid N (listwise)	154				

Source: Field data (2026)

The convergence of the quantitative and qualitative findings suggests that the issue of leadership development is viewed as an essential requirement for the Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Mombasa in meeting the dynamic socio-pastoral demands. Quantitative findings suggested a high degree of agreement among respondents that effective leadership can enhance relationships within the community ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.69$). Also, respondents agreed that the success of projects within the community often relies on the leadership skills of priests ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.71$). Respondents also assigned a high score to the need for training in order to provide better pastoral services ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.82$). These findings suggest that respondents acknowledged the importance of leadership competencies in relation to community relations, project success, and pastoral service.

Qualitative findings assist in providing explanations for these quantitative perceptions by highlighting the actual tasks undertaken by parish leaders. Parish leadership was explained by participants as involving not only pastoral care but also financial management, resolving conflicts, mobilizing communities, and addressing the needs of the parishioners. Such an approach is evident in the statement made by Participant C041: "The true leadership class is the parish. You get there everything that pertains to conflicts, finances, and the needs of the people."

The above example clearly demonstrates how leadership development becomes an essential aspect for the priests due to the experience gained from the administration of the parish. Thus, the qualitative data adds value to the quantitative results by providing insights into reasons for which the participants deemed leadership development as significant in terms of social and administrative functions of priests.

Leadership development was found to be very important in terms of personal development and effectiveness ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.75$) among the quantitative results. Moreover, the necessity of leadership development in view of complex social problems experienced in the community was found to be highly valued ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 0.69$). The qualitative data support the above views by mentioning the strengths and drawbacks of the formal training in leadership development.

Participant C034 said: "Workshops are important because you get ideas on leadership through them, but workshops are not sufficient; the real insights about leadership come when you start implementing your learnings in the parish."

Likewise, participant C028 mentioned that seminars can become purely theoretical unless there are chances to practice what one has learned in real pastoral settings. It may be concluded from these statements that participants appreciate the combination of theory and practice and that they provide a qualitative rationale for the importance of leadership training. Meanwhile, the importance of practical implementation of acquired knowledge is seen as an important step in leadership development.

The topics of mentorship and spiritual formation were also identified in qualitative analysis as important factors

in leadership development. The value of mentorship provided by senior clergy was stressed by Participant C055: "Mentorship is important. Senior priests teach you how to handle the situation which is above the classroom knowledge."

The above case study brings out the significance attached to experience sharing by both the young and experienced priests when dealing with pastoral and administrative duties. Similar sentiments were conveyed by participant C067, where he referred to the retreats as a chance for reflection and reconnecting with his calling while facing the challenges of being in charge of the parish. Both of the above qualitative analyses show that the participants believed that leadership training goes further than learning management skills.

Nonetheless, the qualitative data does not prove that one training approach is better than the other since these were the perceptions of the participants themselves.

Quantitative results also identified disparities between the respondents' ratings of specific reasons for the need for leadership development. The gap in leadership qualities in priests had a mean score of (3.63) ($(SD = 0.81)$) while the notion that priests have to play an active leadership role in social issues had a mean score of (3.40) ($(SD = 0.78)$). The view that the existence of good leadership is critical in solving problems in the Archdiocese had a mean score of (3.27) ($(SD = 0.73)$). These scores are much lower when compared to the views on community relations, project success, and congregational support. These scores indicate that there is relative disagreement with these specific reasons rather than a conclusive proof

that there is a problem with the existing leadership structure.

The qualitative data provides some insights about the perceived inadequacies of formal training especially when classroom learning is not followed up by practical application. However, the interviews provide no conclusive evidence that there is inadequacy of the existing leadership structure in the Archdiocese.

Consequently, from the synthesis of both qualitative and quantitative findings, it can be concluded that the participants viewed the leadership development program as being useful for the pastoral, administrative, and community roles of Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Mombasa. Specifically, the quantitative findings emphasize the importance of leadership in the context of community relations, project implementation, and congregation support, whereas the qualitative findings help to interpret such perceptions by means of parish administration, training, mentoring, and spiritual reflection experiences. Thus, it is possible to say that the participants found the approaches combining training and experience to be valuable.

Nevertheless, there are some factors that need to be considered when interpreting the obtained results. For instance, the cross-sectional research design and the use of subjective perceptions do not allow establishing cause-and-effect relationship or proving objectively the effectiveness of leadership development programs in this case. Besides, the identified training needs cannot serve as evidence for adequacy/inadequacy of the existing institutional approach to leadership development among Catholic priests.

Table 4.13: Correlation between Reasons for Leadership Development and Social Transformation

	Pearson Correlation	Social Transformation
Reasons For Leadership Development Sig. (2-tailed)	.928**	1.00
N		154

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

From Table 4.13 above, there is a highly positive correlation between reasons for leadership development and social transformation among Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Mombasa ($(r = .928, N = 154)$). From the correlation coefficient, the higher the score on reasons for leadership development, the higher the score on social transformation. The correlation was statistically significant at 0.01 level, as denoted by double asterisks (**). Hence, the null hypothesis of the non-significant relationship between the two variables is rejected at 5% level of significance. The result only shows the association and not causation between the variables.

Hypothesis test results

H_01 : Reasons for Leadership Development have no statistically significant influence on social transformation.

From the findings, it emerges that reasons for leadership development strategies has a positive significant relationship with social transformation ($B = 0.180, \beta =$

$0.312, p = 0.001$). This suggests that using more effective leadership development techniques leads to better social transformation results. Thus, it is concluded that the null hypothesis is rejected.

4. DISCUSSION

The highest rated criterion was that good leadership can help build relations in the community ($M = 4.27$). It correlates with the Transformational Leadership Theory, as it is based on the idea of transformational leadership that inspires, motivates, educates, and influences its followers for the sake of achieving a common goal (Bass & Riggio, 2006). In this case, priestly leadership can be seen not only as an act of exercising authority, but also as pastoral service.

The fact that the high score linked to successful community projects ($M = 4.21$) is an illustration of the organizational aspect of priestly leadership cannot be overlooked. Priests often act as institutional leaders

charged with the coordination of development projects and mobilization of resources in parishes. Proper conduct of these activities demands planning, delegation, and communication.

The finding regarding the need for leadership training to improve pastoral work ($M = 4.10$) further underlines the importance of the pastoral aspect of leadership development. This implies that the skills of leaders matter not only in terms of efficiency but also in the pastoral work performed.

The finding about personal and professional effectiveness ($M = 4.08$) is in line with the Transformative Learning Theory. The theory argues that learning can change one's views, assumptions, and practices. In this particular case, leadership development may help priests change their views on parish leadership.

Qualitative data provide an extremely compelling context-based rationale for this. The participants pointed out that a modern day priest serves not only as a spiritual counselor but also as a financial planner, mediator, project manager, and mobilizer of the community. The multi-faceted nature of his responsibilities offers us a practical explanation as to why mere theological training may not suffice.

The finding related to complex social problems ($M = 4.06$) is also consistent with the literature review conducted by the researcher. The researcher has observed that priests are facing social issues such as poverty, unemployment, family breakdowns, inequality and conflicts which demand leadership capabilities beyond their pastoral roles.

The finding related to evolving social dynamics ($M = 3.81$) also implies that the development of leadership is not a one-time requirement. With changing social environment, the leadership capabilities also need to evolve. Moldoveanu and Narayandas (2019) also stress on the need for developing leadership capabilities in an ambiguous and unpredictable world environment.

The relative lower mean regarding the adequacy of the present leadership structures to deal with challenges facing the Archdiocese ($M = 3.27$) needs to be understood very carefully. It does not necessarily suggest that the present leadership structures are inadequate. On the contrary, in this study, the participants showed lesser degree of agreement with the factor compared to the other factors. This could be because the need for the development of leadership is more because of change of responsibility and social reality than the institutional inadequacy perception.

The existence of the relationship with the correlation of $r = .617$ between reasons for leadership development and social transformation indicates a moderate positive association between both the factors. However, a correlation does not mean causation. Therefore, the correlation must be viewed as the proof of the association between the two factors. It should also be pointed out that the issue of the item overlap must be considered as some of the reasons for leadership development can be measuring the perceptions of the participants on the

outcomes of the leadership development that include relationships and social transformation. The item overlap between both the factors can make the correlation coefficient higher than required.

This is in line with the Transformational Leadership Theory, whereby an individual should be capable of motivating, empowering, and inspiring people to move towards a common goal and make positive change (Bass & Riggio, 2006). This is in line with the need to develop some leadership skills as a result of the need for priests to mobilize the people in solving social challenges together. As such, a priest operating in the context of the parish would be in a position to offer spiritual leadership, and inspire collective action in dealing with social challenges.

CONCLUSION

From the findings, it became clear that the leadership skill development among the priests of Archdiocese of Mombasa is necessary due to several contemporary issues. The most prominent issues included increasing complexity of social issues, managerial and pastoral work, personal and professional development, administrative issues, congregational support, and community development. Issues related to change in expectations of the community members and lack of leadership skills among some of the priests were also found to be important; however, these factors could not gain unanimous agreement and therefore can be taken as moderately important factors.

It was found from the quantitative as well as qualitative analysis that leadership issues of the priests extend beyond the spiritual aspects to include the issues of finance management, conflict management, project management, communication and mobilization, and pastoral leadership.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRIESTLY FORMATION

From the research findings, the following recommendations have been made for the key stakeholders in priestly formation and ministry.

In the first place, the seminaries ought to make sure that there is formation in administrative skills. This is possible through incorporation of skills like financial management, planning, budgeting, resource management and organisational management in the formation programs of the priests.

Secondly, the Archdiocese of Mombasa ought to ensure that there is formation in people management skills. Formation in this context should focus on such things as communication, conflict resolution, teamwork, participatory decision-making, and relationships management in order to enhance the people dealing skills of priests.

Third, the KCCB and the diocesan formation programs should guarantee that continuing formation considers changing social realities. This means that the formation programs should train priests on how to deal effectively

with such problems as poverty, unemployment among the youth, family break downs, social exclusion and community conflicts apart from taking into account the pastoral and spiritual dimensions of priesthood.

Fourth, the priests are supposed to engage in the process of developing their leadership abilities. Leadership skills include self-reflection, professional learning, and mentorship among others.

Sixth, a training-needs assessment should be done by the Archdiocese of Mombasa before the development or redesigning of any leadership development program for the priests. Training-needs assessment will help in determining the training needs for administrative, interpersonal, community development, pastoral and personal leadership skills among others. This will ensure that the development programs meet the training needs of the priests.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The research took place geographically within the Archdiocese of Mombasa, and concentrated on the Catholic clergy within this particular ecclesiastical setting. The results must therefore be understood from the perspective of the institutional and social environment within the Archdiocese.

The research design was largely based on perceptions of the respondents; hence social desirability and common-method bias are likely in this case. As a consequence of the cross-sectional nature of the research design, no inferences can be drawn regarding either changes or any causal relationships between leadership development and social transformation. The overlap between constructs in the measurement of reasons for leadership development and its consequences can explain the inflated relationship. Another important thing to note is that the study is restricted to views of the priests alone and does not include opinions of the parishioners and laity. Non-response bias (16.85% non-response), reverse causation, omitted-variable confounding and the absence of a measured training-exposure variable should also be acknowledged.

Comparative research in other dioceses would shed more light on the influence of geographical, institutional and cultural environments on leadership-development needs of Catholic priests.

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